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Diary
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GERALD AND HIS FRIEND THE DOCTOR;

A

Record of the Experiences of Certain Young Men.

BY

THE REV. HENRY SOLLY,

Author of "Gonzaga: a Dramatic Tale of Florence;" "The Development of Religious Life in the Modern Christian Church," "Working Men's Clubs and Institutes," &c.

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY NOTICE BY LORD LYTTELTON.

In Two Volumes.

VOL. I.

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To the Memory of
FREDERICK DENISON MAURICE,

FROM WHOSE MEMORABLE WORDS AND DEEDS,

ABOVE ALL FROM WHOSE CHRIST-LIKE SPIRIT AND LIFE,

MEN — WHILE LEARNING THEIR NEED OF DELIVERANCE

From Selfishness and Sensuality, from Idolatry and Fear,

From Isolation and Pride —

HAVE LEARNED ALSO TO FIND AND TO LOVE

THEIR DELIVERER,

“THESE EXPERIENCES”

OF TEMPTED, STRIVING, SINNING, SUFFERING,

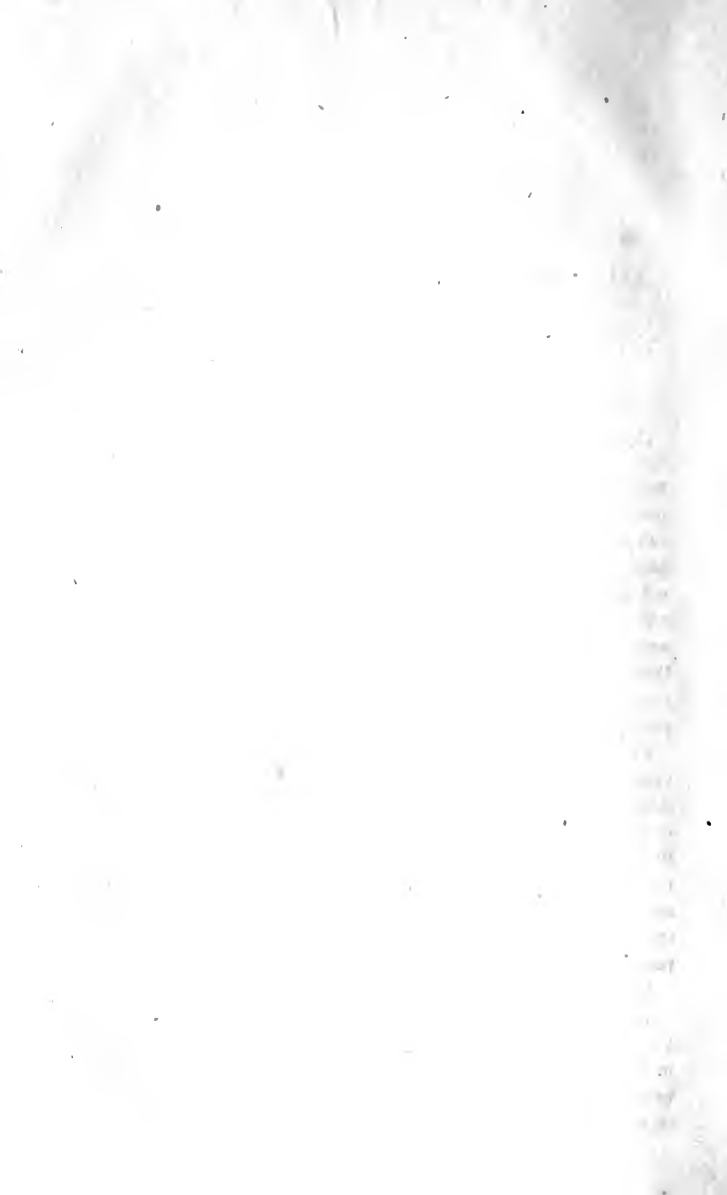
BUT IMMORTAL SOULS,

Are Inscribed,

WITH HONOUR, AND LOVE, AND HOPE,

BY THE AUTHOR.

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TO
THE RIGHT HON. LORD LYTTTELTON,
D.C.L., K.C.M.G.

DEAR LORD LYTTTELTON,

None know better than yourself that the present is an age in which many struggles are going on for moral and social reforms. The humble part I have endeavoured to take in some of these has brought me the privilege of your friendship, and the very valuable aid of your personal and social influence during many past years. But among all the efforts being made to promote such reforms I doubt if there are any of greater importance than those which aim at purifying and elevating the sacred relationships that exist between the two sexes, and thereby striking at the root of those great social evils and terrible problems which, after eighteen centuries of professing Christianity, still so grievously afflict and pollute society.

For nearly forty years I have had it on my conscience to do something, however imperfectly, towards this object; and the following "Record" is the contribution, prepared amid the intervals of a busy life, which I have at last to offer. I am well aware of its defects, but as we journey on we learn that it is no use waiting till we can accomplish our appointed work *perfectly*, but that we must just do our best, leaving other people and a good Providence to make the most of our contribution which its merits or demerits permit.

Having regard, however, to the delicate and difficult nature of some of the subjects that had to be dealt with, it was natural that I should seek your lordship's countenance and support in this, as in sundry other attempts to be of use, believing that your opinion would be valued, and your name and character would be serviceable in recommending the book and its main objects to the world. Of

course some people would prefer that social and many other evils were left to flourish without those protests which call attention to their existence. But I have long felt, deeply and painfully, that such avoidance and false refinement largely foster these iniquities ; and that true delicacy, as well as moral faithfulness, demand an outspoken denunciation or exposure of those works of darkness which shrink before the light. To bring home to the conscience and heart, indeed, the lessons which have to be learnt, if we would successfully contend against evil, it is often necessary to dispense with rose-water, and to call a spade a spade. There can be no telling lights in a picture without proportionate shadows ; and if we are to use fiction at all as a vehicle for truth, I apprehend we must make our fiction as truthful a representation of reality as the demands of true propriety on the one hand, and the laws of Art on the other justify or require. If an author finds men and women in his imaginary world, naturally talking and acting (according to all his experience) in a way that offends refined taste and true morality, he must not distort their speech and conduct to give an appearance of unnatural propriety. Neither, if he knows that certain other personages would of necessity, under given circumstances, quote from the Bible, offer up a prayer, or express religious convictions, is he permitted to conceal the fact lest he or they be accused of hypocrisy and cant. To be of any use in this world we must, above all things, be truthful. Philosophic fiction presents no exception to this principle ; and while we are trying to lighten the shadows in the real social landscape, we may be thankful for anything that helps us to realize how dark and terrible those shadows are, in our own hearts and in the world around us. The more thoroughly we do so, the more we shall feel our need of redemption from our follies and misdoings—and the more willing, I suppose, to seek and welcome Deliverance.

It was, I suppose, because your lordship and another man, whom I am also proud to call my friend, George Macdonald, held these views—that you both underwent the fatigue, and made the sacrifice of time involved in toiling through this work in manuscript, and both finally approved of its publication. Your own opinion you have kindly undertaken to give here by way of Introductory Notice. Mr. Macdonald communicated to me his general opinion of it in terms too flattering to quote, mingled with invaluable criticisms, by

which I have endeavoured uniformly to profit before publication. It would be difficult adequately to express one's gratitude that two men, standing so high alike in moral character and literary ability, and so incessantly occupied, should have taken the trouble above mentioned, and have, in consequence, given their general approval to the effort I have ventured to make.

While expressing my obligations to Mr. Macdonald and yourself, I must also refer to the kindness of another friend (in the far West), who, having interested himself in the publication of this book, and finding that I could not venture to print it at my own risk, generously guaranteed me against the chance of pecuniary loss, which I should not, myself, have been justified in incurring, and thereby enabled me to let it see the light.

Considering the value of the aid your lordship has rendered me in this and several other attempts to be of some little use to mankind in general, it was natural I should wish to be allowed to dedicate "Gerald and his Friend" to yourself, had it not been a decided anomaly to dedicate a work to a person who was writing an Introductory Notice. But there was one noble and sacred memory dear to you, and to thousands of Englishmen besides—very dear to me, and intimately associated with the course, real or imaginary, of some of the following "experiences." It seemed, therefore, very desirable to me, and advisable to you, that I should dedicate these "simple annals" to the memory of a man to whom I felt under the deepest obligations, for whom we both entertained so profound a respect and regard while he was living here, and whose character and work alike justify any attempt, however humble, to express honour and love towards him now that he is gone to a higher life elsewhere.

In no department of his life was Frederick Denison Maurice more admirable, or perhaps more useful, than in his efforts to raise the moral and intellectual condition of the working-classes of this country. I owed him much for the lessons I learned from him, not merely in the matter of theology and religion, but also in regard to associations for promoting that great improvement. Since the days when I knew something of young men's trials, I have learnt much of working men's troubles, and have looked with deep interest on the various means suggested for raising their moral, social, physical, and political condition. I believe you will agree with me that the

principles held, and the lessons taught by Mr. Maurice, indicate with wonderful power and truthfulness the path which should be trod alike by him who would help young men to live a manly, Christian life, and by him who seeks to elevate the Industrial classes. As I have learned in later years to look with fervent hope to these classes for a new influence, and an element of fresh, youthful nobleness, that shall renew our national life—somewhat (though in a higher and more peaceful fashion) as the young Gothic nations renewed the life of an ancient and corrupt civilisation—I can find no fitter introduction to the public (independently of what you may be led to say) for these young men's "Experiences," than the closing sentences of Mr. Maurice's Dedication of the noble Lectures, which he delivered on "Learning and Working," preparatory to the establishment of the Working Men's College. After speaking of that true Brotherhood, and common Fatherhood, in which stands our relation to the Son of Man and the Son of God, and in the knowledge of which all our efforts for the moral and social benefit of others and ourselves must be rooted—after adverting to the hindrances, defeats, and bereavements, which those must experience who labour for lofty and unselfish ends—Mr. Maurice concludes in these words:—

"In our College, and in all our tasks, may we work as those who are cheered on by the voices of invisible friends! And when the clouds that overhang our country are thickest, and men who are worthy to be trusted appear to be the fewest, may we be able to hope that God will do His own work; and out of those who are lowest in human eyes—our *common* people—will raise up citizens that will be fit to live and die for England, if not to rule her."

That his prayer may be answered, and that many more from the *select* circle, which has the good fortune to number your Lordship in its ranks, may come forward as generously and unweariedly as you have done, to give "the common people" a brotherly helping hand—is the earnest prayer,

Dear Lord Lyttelton,

Of your sincere friend,

HENRY SOLLY.

GROVE HOUSE, HAMPSTEAD, N.W.,

July 26th, 1874.

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

My friend, the author of this tale, has thought it might be of advantage that I should write a few words by way of introduction to it.

I cannot pretend to do so in respect of the book simply as a novel or work of fiction. I am no great judge of that branch of literature; but the book, as will appear, has a high moral purpose in view, and I fully adopt the opinion that such a purpose may be admirably served by skilful and life-like fiction, such as I believe will be found in these volumes. On this point I may refer to an unquestionable authority—a dry, ethical writer and politician, who probably cared as little for novels, as mere recreation, as any one who ever lived—I mean Sir James Mackintosh. “Fictitious narrative,” he says (*Life*, ii. 20), “in all its forms, is one of the grand instruments in the moral elevation of mankind.” And he follows this out in a passage long and careful enough to be called by himself an essay (*Ib.* 125—135).

But it is on one special object, rather, I should say, on one special method of this book, that I must dwell a little. That object is to hold out warning, reproof, encouragement, example, to young men against their worst enemy—“the lust of the flesh.” The method is plain-speaking—to a degree very unusual in these days, but for which the author conceives he has warrant in sound reason, in truthfulness, and in Scripture.

The obligation and the abstract importance of this form of moral restraint are denied by no one. That it is the most difficult form may be admitted. But that it is more than a mere question of degree—that the difficulty amounts to impossibility—that the inevitable imperfection and shortcoming (nay, possibly, occasional and incidental inconvenience) of *any* attempt to deal with it, are reasons, more than in any other case, for not making the attempt—these are, I believe, among the worst and most pernicious delusions which afflict mankind.

I will refer to weighty and kindly words, of one of the most unjustly-slandered men who ever lived, but one whose memory has lived down those slanders, and whom we may now quote without fear—a man from whom in details we may differ, but whose main thesis is irrefragable, if anything ever was—I mean Malthus. “If moral restraint” (he says) “be the only virtuous mode of avoiding the incidental evils arising from the principle of population, an obligation to practice it will evidently rest exactly upon the same foundation as our obligation to practice any of the other virtues.”

“Passion, instead of being extinguished, as it now too frequently is by early sensuality, would only be repressed for a time, that it might afterwards burn with a brighter, purer, and steadier flame.”

“No imputation on the benevolence of the Deity can be founded on the laws of nature respecting population, which is not equally applicable to any of the evils necessarily incidental to an imperfect state of existence.”*

Let me put the matter a little more precisely. Malthus himself thought that on our present general system, with some improved social arrangements, young men might very generally look to marriage at twenty-seven or twenty-eight. Suppose we say twenty-five or twenty-six. Does anyone seriously believe that in an old and crowded country like this we shall ever carry it much further? That it is conceivable (even if on other grounds it were desirable) that our young men shall ever be able to marry, as the rule, at twenty or twenty-one? And if not, how is it possible to blink the necessity of inculcating this moral restraint, unless we are prepared to abandon the attempt to maintain the most sacred foundations of virtue and morality?

How to inculcate, then, is the only question. There are parents, I believe, who have on this matter advised their sons in plain language, and with good effect. But many do not know how to do so; and most books and addresses, spoken or written, *avoid* plain language, and such is for the most part the customary rule among us.

I do not condemn the rule, but it need not be exclusive, and if even there be some risk in deviating from it, the risk may be worth running.

The author has boldly taken by the horns a most dangerous bull,

* III. pp. 83, 89, 101, ed. 1817. See the whole of the first two chapters of the IVth Book; also the last chapter of the work.

and I commend his attempt as a brave and honest one in this most vital of causes.

I am not to be understood as necessarily agreeing with all that is said or implied in the book; nor do I intend to recommend it for universal reading, nor attempt to define for whom it is suitable. But I do believe that "this bullet has its billet," nay, its many billets.

I have spoken of the rule *now* customary among us. Our ancestors were not so mealy-mouthed: and we may, though with hesitation, credit the author of (say) Joseph Andrews, with a sincere moral purpose. But no one would seriously compare the coarse daubing of that story with the delineation of high and pure principle in these volumes, any more than those who know Henry Solly would do him the injustice to compare his character with that of Henry Fielding.

LYTTELTON.

HAGLEY HALL,

Aug. 4, 1874.

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GERALD AND HIS FRIEND THE DOCTOR.

CHAPTER I.

"O WHAT a jolly row!" exclaimed a fat little urchin, who was tumbling along in a race with the rest of Mr. Botherum's pupils, as they rushed out of the school-room immediately after dinner.

"What's it all about, Tommy Diddler?" asked one of the rush.

"Oh, there's going to be a fight."

"Hush, you young beggar," growled an older boy, "or I'll knock your head off—don't you see old Priggins there?"

"Between Gerry Arlington," continued the fat little boy to his companion, in a lower key, "and the new fellow, Willy Grantham. I am so glad; Willy, you'll see, will thrash Gerry all to shivers."

"But I like Gerry," objected the lad addressed.

"Oh, he's very good for games and stories, and that sort of thing, but you see he fancies he is so precious grand because he lives in a fine house and his father keeps dogs and gardeners. He's always giving himself airs, and cocking it over all the little chaps that he thinks he can thrash—and Willy's bigger than he, though he's in a lower form, don't ye see—and he won't stand Gerry's cockiness—so the big fellows said they should fight it out, and there's to be a ring behind the gardens: oh! here it is, and there they are! my eyes, what jolly fun!"

"I say," said one of the older boys, nudging his companion, "isn't Gerry Arlington in a funk, that's all!"

"All the more game of him," replied his friend, "to come up so smart to the scratch. It'll be a stunner this time, oh golly!"

Stripped to the shirt sleeves, there the combatants certainly stood, very unequally matched to look at. Willy Grantham was half a head taller than his antagonist, who, however, looked as lithe and active as a young tiger. But a deadly paleness overspread the smaller boy's delicately-cut features. It was evidently no satisfaction to him to be set up there to pommel and be pommelled by his red-faced, sturdy, honest-looking foe. Had the truth been told, Master Gerry probably was wishing he had been more considerate and forbearing towards the new-comer, and not claimed rights of dominion over him, which he could not sustain without a battle. However, there was no help for it now; any amount of torture could be welcomed rather than disgrace. But the worst of Gerry's sufferings, if he was suffering, were over when the signal was given, and the blows began to fall fast and furious on either side. Gerry was too proud and sensitive, as well as ambitious, to be generally popular, but those of the boys with whom he was on familiar terms, and the little ones whom he patronized and protected, loved him greatly; some believed him to be a genius, a poet, a small hero of some sort, and worshipped him accordingly. No doubt he could be very fascinating, but he certainly did give himself airs.

So opinions were divided in the "ring." The majority longed to see him have a good "setting down," "to take the conceit out of him;" many of his equals longed to see a stop put to his impudent assumptions of authority over the lower forms. But the little hearts of many of the smaller boys ached to see their favourite so unequally matched, and after the fight had fairly begun, nearly all, even Willy's own backers and Gerry's strongest opponents, admired the desperate pluck with which the smaller boy took his thrashing, and the daring activity with which, regardless of punishment, he flung himself at his antagonist's face and leaped within the massive guard of Willy's long, stout arms. That doughty young champion fought well and kept himself cool. There was nothing fierce or vindictive in his heart, but he knocked his antagonist about somewhat as the windmill did the knight of La Mancha.

"Give in, Gerry, give in!" at length shouted several voices, as the blood came streaming from his face, and he was being gradually forced further and further back. But Gerry had no idea of "giving in;" he had never been beaten yet, and yield now he wouldn't, in spite of the mauling he was getting. So at last some of the elder boys admiring the little one's "game," and satisfied that he would not again attempt unlawful usurpation over boys bigger than himself, rather apprehensive also that the master might find them out

and make a row, in which case *they* would all be punished together, interfered at length, and separated the panting pugilists.

It was not too soon. Gerry was getting faint. Soon he was conscious of being treated with unwonted kindness by some of the upper form, and being tenderly washed at the pump. Next, he found himself carried off to bed, while the doctor was sent for, as one of the servants got alarmed on seeing the condition of her favourite, and straightway "peached."

However, no serious consequences ensued to him beyond two black eyes, and an ugly gash over one of them. The following day Gerry appeared in the playground with said black eyes, shook hands with Willy, who was far from wishing to insist on any claim to victory, but with generous and awkward good humour accepted his late foe as on equal terms. So as the masters in their hearts agreed with the upper form in believing that the fight had been a needful check to young Arlington's conceit and schemes of usurpation, and not having extricated themselves from the barbarous notions of the necessity for occasional pugilistic encounters (theoretically forbidden at Beachum) the upper form escaped with a well-feigned severe reprimand and things resumed their wonted course. Gerry, to his great satisfaction, found himself however considerably less snubbed thenceforth by the elder boys and more popular generally. To show one's self thoroughly plucky was the certain road to favour in the Beachum academy. In the meantime Gerry had learnt a useful lesson, and had just enough common sense to act upon it. But from that day he never trembled at the thought of fighting. He had gone through the worst of it, had come out of it much happier than he went in, and, as far as that bugbear was concerned, found peace. Probably, also, this fight took a deal of conceit out of him, and helped to turn his love of dominion into a healthier channel.

It was a few days after the battle just recorded that, as two of the elder boys were lolling together over the palings in the course of a half-holiday, one of them nodded to an athletic youth who was leading a pony along the road that ran near the playground. On the pony sat a young lady. The youth wielded a thick stick in a martial style, had a Robin Hood's feather in a very jaunty cap on his head, and swaggered along the road, "as if he were saying to every one he met," observed a Beachum usher, "who the devil's afraid of you?"

"Pray, who's your swashbuckler friend?" asked the boy (fresh from the perusal of "Peveril of the Peak") who didn't nod to this youth, of the one that did.

"Oh, don't you know him?" was the reply. "He's the parson's son—Harry Fortescue—lives up at the Rectory over the hill there, and that's his half-sister—a regular charmer, she. The jolliest, pluckiest young rascal, is the male animal, I ever met with. I never saw such a young beggar for a row. He did something the other night, Stephen" (the boot and shoe cleaner to the establishment) "was telling me, which I confess I should have shirked myself, and you don't give me credit, Jack, for funking much, do you?"

Jack having expressed a satisfactory opinion on that point, and inquired further particulars, the first speaker continued thus:—

"Why, you know there was a lot of gipsies came into the town the other night, and squatted among the low Irish in that beastly hole all down by Providence Row, and Meg Cribb's yard."

"I know," nodded Jack, complacently.

"Well, the first night they were there they let their donkeys into several gentlemen's paddocks, and among others, into the lawn of the Rectory. Young Fortescue, coming down betimes in the morning, before the gipsies were awake, found Balaam among the flower-beds, soon heard where he came from, and, by George! he marches my long-eared gentleman off to the pound, right through the very thick of the gipsies and Providence Row! There they stood, boys and men, showing their teeth at him, and grasping their cudgels, but the devil-a-bit did he care. And he went right through them all, got the donkey safe in the pound, and marched back again, as coolly as if he had been in his dad's garden."

"Were the scamps cowed, do you think?"

"Partly that, and partly that sort of animal has a great respect for pluck. But with a curious kind of chivalry, while they wouldn't set on him in a mob, they determined to punish him a bit in fair play. So they made a ring as he came back, set one of their biggest lads before him, and invited him to strip."

"He thanked them, and whistled for the police, like a gentleman?"

"Not he! The chance was delicious to his soul. He cheerfully handed his hat and coat to a girl in the crowd—no doubt a gipsy belle—and, Stephen says, went into the gipsy champion like 'two-and-a-stunner.' Stephen says it was smashing work for ten minutes, and then they dragged their man away, patted Fortescue on the back, and swore he was the pluckiest young bloke they had clapped eyes on for a moon's dance, asked him to let them drink his health, and cheered till the street rang again,

when he forked out half-a-crown and wished them good morning. Wasn't it a rum go?"

"What a lark!" rejoined Jack, thoughtfully. "Why, it must have been almost better fun than our mill here the other day!"

"Aye! I was rather sorry to see poor little Gerry knocked about so. But it'll do him good, Jack—it will. Yet he is a wonderful young chap, and I love him—I can't tell you how I love that young quiz. He's game to the back-bone, and tells such first-rate stories at night. But Fortescue's the fellow to back, you know, if you come to that."

Here the talk was interrupted by an appeal to help make up sides for cricket, and nothing more appears to be known of any of the parties except two, who, however, turn up again four years later—at which period the following chapter commences, during the pleasant summer-time of the year of grace 1831.

CHAPTER II.

"WELL, you be'ant a-going to 'ave the 'osses no how, and that's all about it, I never seed either on you afore"—and so saying the exasperated ostler suddenly wrenched the key of the stable door from the grasp of a muscular young gentleman in a green riding-coat, who instantly prepared to punish that faithful functionary's impertinence by tucking up his coat sleeves, and letting drive a formidable fist at the object of his wrath. But the Fates were merciful, interposing in the shape of the young pugilist's companion, a remarkably handsome, bright-eyed youth, with delicate but classical features and wavy chestnut locks, broad shoulders and active limbs, singularly graceful of figure, but not nearly so tall as his companion. This individual caught his friend's arm, exclaiming, "Nonsense, Harry, don't make a fool of yourself—the fellow——"

"Deserves a deuced good thrashing," roared the indignant Rugbeian, fresh from the well-fought campaigns, which, as was remarked in the last chapter, were the frequent exercises of all our public schools thirty years ago. "Didn't his master *promise* us the prads—isn't it our last chance?—confound the beggar! Isn't he

diddling us now because those dirty young Eton prigs have tipped him five shillings to keep the door locked and swear the brutes are out, that they may have 'em fresh for a lark to Greenwich?"

"I tell you they be'ant there—don't I?" snarled the ostler.

"Confound you! then what *is* there?"

"Why, you see there be a brood mare as must be kept quiet."

"A likely joke, you lying dog—give up his two best loose boxes to an old mare!"

"Ah, but her foal's with her, may be."

(Green-coat in a towering rage)—"May be! you're a cursed —. Never mind, Neddy," he concluded, with a sudden change of manner, as the guilty horse-keeper edged away with hanging-down head and arm ready to act on the defensive, ludicrously uncertain whether to show fight or ask pardon, "you see I know all about it, you dummy, and you'd go down at the third round, but I won't cost you your place; so there's a tizzy to drink our healths for all the names I've called you, you lying old villain, and don't expect to see *us* any more. Good-night, my hearty!" So saying, he flipped a sixpence good-humouredly into the man's hat, and taking his friend's arm walked leisurely out of the livery stables yard, not without looking regretfully over his shoulder and muttering, "I should have liked to knock a little honesty into him, though, my Gerry."

"You are just as bad as ever, Harry. What is the good of getting into rows with all these blackguards?"

Harry faced round, planted himself firmly before his friend, and exclaimed in an injured-innocence tone—

"Gerald, when shall I have convinced you that man is born to fight? Don't you see the great work——."

"I see the great crowd we shall soon have round us, if we don't walk on. I do believe the ragamuffins, disappointed in your knocking under to the ostler, are expecting the gratification of a set-to between *us*." Which comical idea sent Master Harry off into such a hearty roar of laughter, that the grim lookers-on, just turned out at the end of their day's work from a neighbouring foundry, hopeless now of hostilities, wheeled round disgusted, and agreed among themselves that "them ere dandy nob's were but white-livered monkies arter all."

"Well, my boy, what shall it be?" said Harry, as they dawdled away. "It's our last night together," he added, looking wistfully at his companion, "for many a day, so as we can't have our beloved steeds, shall we try some other stables? or (looking at his watch), it's just six, suppose we get on the Woodford Coach, and have a

ramble through Epping Forest, or rush to Searles, and pull up to Hammersmith, if the tide serves?"

"That's the ticket, Harry! Nothing like the river!" (For thirty years ago, Father Thames *was* sweet above Westminster Bridge, and *not* swarming with steamers.)

So the two friends walked briskly along from the neighbourhood of Finsbury Square to Cheapside, when behold! they espied a queer-looking, cumbrous vehicle like a corpulent gig that had thrown out a wen on its right side—advantage of which deformity being taken by a fast hackney-coachman, who was perched thereon, and now lifted his arm to our admiring youths.

"Cab, sir—cab? New cabriolet, sir?"

"What on earth is that?" quoth Gerry.

"Why, one of the new cabriolets, and precious convenient they are, Gerry—spin away twice as fast as the old jarvies. Come along. It would take us three-quarters of an hour, at least, to walk to Searles', and an hour in a jarvey."

So in they jumped, and scrambled along at a wonderful pace up Cheapside, and over Blackfriars Bridge, to the no small edification of His Majesty's liege subjects, who had not yet become sufficiently accustomed to these new and rapid whirligigs to let them pass without sarcastic observations.

"Halt!"—and the cab stumbled up to the famous boatyard, where enterprising metropolitan youth once were wont to betake themselves (perhaps still are) in large numbers at various hours, according to the tide.

"Under three miles—two shillings the fare; but drove well. Give him half-a-crown, Gerry," quoth Harry, as he sprung forwards to secure his favourite boat.

But Jehu hadn't driven hackney carriages for ten years without learning what England expects of every hackney-coachman and cabman—viz., *not* a habit of systematic contentment.

"Hi! stop, you sir! This won't do—my fare's three shillings."

"Oh, indeed—very well!" cried Harry, returning. "Give me back the half-crown, then," and he took out his purse. The cabman, rejoicing in his easy and victorious swindle, returned the half-crown, extending his hand for the three shillings. Harry placed two shillings there instead, saying, with a quiet smile of contempt—"that's your fare. We gave you sixpence extra for driving well. Gerry, take his number. I'm going to summon you, fellow, for overcharging."

The man looked as if he could have roasted the young Englander alive, but, measuring his proportions first, got safely on to his seat,

then cursed him by all his gods, and lashing his poor brute, shuffled away in a shambling canter, fighting very shy of young gentlemen in green riding-coats for a week afterwards.

The river presented an animated scene. Nearly a score of boats had pushed off within the last ten minutes, with every variety of crew, from the simple sculler, and the awkward shop-keeper's apprentice, up to the gallant "eight-oar" of the crack club. The tide was excellent—would be running up for at least two hours longer. The magnificent towers of Westminster Abbey stood out in grand relief against the western sky, while the declining August sun still shone brilliantly over the majestic stream, as the two rowers, tranquil in all the pride of youth, strength, and happiness, with vigorous strokes glided calmly and swiftly up the stream.

"Well, you did him there, my doctor, fairly enough," presently observed Gerry, with a customary reference to his friend's strong propension towards medical researches; "but you *are* too combative. I should be miserable if I were always on the edge of a row, as you are."

"And yet you took to your fighting kindly enough at old Botherum's, didn't you?"

"No. It knocked a deal of conceit and effeminacy, as well as perhaps some of my cowardice, out of me, but it was always utterly hateful to me."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed Harry, as he turned round on his seat to gaze on his friend with wonder and admiration. "Well, then, I must say I behold you with sentiments akin to respect. To fight as you did, and yet hate it—that's grand. *I* always liked it."

"Ah, but it's not grand to funk it as I did. It wasn't love of peace made me hate it, but sheer cowardice."

"Don't believe it; you haven't a shred of the coward in you, Gerry. Now, I'll declare I'll tell you what some of the Beachum fellows said to me that day when you left for good, as the coach went off, and I was almost blubbering—'There goes the pluckiest fellow for a row with the snobs, or a smasher at foot-balling, we ever did know at Beachum!' Don't blush, Gerry, if you tell lies about yourself, I'll convict you. It's your artistic, amiable, quasi-angel sort of inner man, that makes you dislike rows."

"Oh, gammon! You know little about me, Harry, after all," said Gerald rather seriously. "Why, I'd give all the amiable fiddlesticks you ever discerned in me, for one slice of your dare-devil backbone, my doctor. But, hilloa! pull, man, pull, or we shall be under that barge. Ship your oar! All right, but

it was a near touch," and he wiped the perspiration from his forehead, for it was no joke pulling bow to Harry Fortescue's stroke. "That comes of chattering instead of minding one's business."

"We'll pull more gently, for we may as well talk, Gerry. We can't do it this time to-morrow. I want to ask you if you don't think that God meant men to fight—intended it, not as a mere exercise of animal passion, such as impels savage beasts, but as a great means of making a fellow noble—and all that sort of thing? Look at the manly virtues called forth by war in all ages—the heroism, courage, fortitude, patience, self-sacrifice! Why, the noblest qualities of our nature, Gerald, would never have been exhibited without Thermopylæ and Marathon."

"Tell it to the Greeks, Harry, on the Stock Exchange!"

"You dare!—*You*, the Byron-worshipper!" cried Harry, turning round indignantly.

"Spare me, my fighting Bob! It's the depth of my feelings makes me sardonic, don't you see? But as to Thermopylæ—*cum omnibus aliis*—well, those were wars of a defensive, patriotic description. Grand, I grant—" (pause) "but pray, how many Marathons in history compared with barbarous invaders' victories?"

"Aye; but remember, most wars of oppression, my boy, involved wars of resistance too. Besides, it is not merely the having a good cause to fight for, nor getting the victory, I fancy, that does the good; though, of course, I know a brave soldier is a better man for fighting in a good cause. It is the having to resist what comes against us to do us mischief—the habit and the power, you see, of overcoming what would otherwise overcome and crush *us*. Oh, my Gerry! to be able to *give* a blow and *bear* one, that's something worth living for! Ha,—ha,—yep,—ho!" and with a laugh and a cheer, he gave two or three vigorous strokes that made the buoyant wherry shoot like a swallow after a fly out of her previous course, and menace another frail skiff in which five young men were labouring untidily along.

"Easy! easy!" sang out the shrill voice of the small figure who officiated as coxswain, while he started up in alarm.

"Sit down, will you!" growled one of their crew, in a surly tone. "Do you want to send us all to the devil at once?" And he put out his hand to give the offending wherry's nose a vicious shove.

"Beg your pardon," cried Fortescue, gaily.

"Awkward rowing, now, without a coxswain," quoth the surly young man.

"Not a bit of it," rejoined Harry: "our bow oar's a wonderful chap—been coached by the Lord Mayor—got eyes in the back of his head: don't you see? Pull away, Gerry."

The other man answered with a grunt; the rest looked too fagged and serious to comment either on the joke or the transaction. Gerald now recognised one of the party as a fellow student at the London University, with whom he had become slightly acquainted, and nods were exchanged. "A pleasant night for a row"—"I believe you"—and so they parted.

"Did you ever see such a contrast as that bilious chap who spoke to us, and the young fellow with the curly hair, behind him?" quoth Fortescue, as they pulled off.

"I don't know the two behind," answered Gerald, "but the curly-pate is named Featherstone—comes to our classes."

"I like his looks. Is he the right stuff?"

"Seems idle, and too fond of larking. I think I've seen the others too, among the college medicals, perhaps. But what an intensely comical little animal was he of the tiller! Should you call them gentlemen?"

"Yes, of a sort; but if you are not bored, let me finish what I was saying."

"Provided you pull steady——"

"Aye, aye, sir. What I mean is this——"

But just at this moment, strains of music came floating up the breeze. "Listen!" exclaimed Gerald: "how beautiful!" and he seemed lost in the delicious enjoyment. No chance for reflections on war then. Presently an eight-oared cutter came sweeping round the point of Chelsea Reach. Gay ribbands floated from the fair occupants of cushioned benches. The stalwart young rowers looked over grim mustachios, alternately at the bonnets and at their work. The music in the stern sheets came soft and clear across the sparking waters.

"So will we sweep up the stream of life, Harry, to Fame, and Love, and Victory," whispered Gerald, as the gallant craft rushed on its way, and was lost in the distance. But Harry answered not, and once again they bent to their oars.

"Who do you think they were?" said Gerald.

"Guardsmen, going up to the Star and Garter, to supper."

"But the ladies?"

"Ladies! Ugh!" Gerald turned up his nose, disgusted, but Harry was now at work in a way that required all his companion's attention, so they pulled on silently for about half-an-hour, each absorbed in his own reflections."

"Your childhood must have been a very jolly one, Gerry," at length observed Fortescue, with unwonted deliberation. "What with those grounds, and the dogs, and the pony, &c."

"You may say that, Harry! and then the pond, and the boat, the dogs and pony, and the carpenter's shop! oh, Jupiter! they were blessed days. I could wander about the grounds and fields at dear old Hartland all day long, like a regular young nincompoop—acting the stories I read, or building arbours on the ground, and castles in the air."

"But didn't you want companions?"

"Not a bit. I had lots of them when I went to school—rather too many sometimes. But I had brother Richard, you know?"

"True; I forgot him."

"And cousins often used to come and stay at Hartland House. And then we acted plays! Oh, didn't we do it in style! 'Bombastes Furioso' was nothing to us! Only fancy!

'My name is Norval

On the Grampian Hills

And Gerry Bounce elsewhere."

"Fiddlesticks!" cried Harry, as his friend's merry laugh rang out; "I know you were really half mad about that acting."

A long interval again. Steady pulling brought them into the regions of Kew. When opposite the Duke of Buccleuch's—

"Gerald," quoth Harry, "suppose we drop anchor under that willow? The tide will soon be turning, and the moon will be up; I want to hear a little more of your petticoat days."

His friend willingly concurred, and lolling on the benches of their wherry, in the warm, soft eventide, looking into the clear, glowing sunset sky through the parted branches of the graceful tree, with the broad, silvery stream, gliding ceaselessly past, the two friends indulged in those bright yet dreamy expositions of their respective views and anticipations, which are at once the charm and the characteristic of youth. A couple of young fools, you think, no doubt. But never mind—Men under fifty move the world: older men only guide it. "Give me the guidance in preference, nevertheless, if I can get it," say the wise men, and they take care of their health accordingly.

It was a golden time; indeed, the whole evening was one never forgotten. The young men were just at that interesting and critical period of existence ceasing to be hobbydehoys—flushing into manhood, full of hope and energy, instinct with noble aspirations, having just passed the mystic age of eighteen, and Gerald Arlington

being a little the elder. They had first become cronies while Gerald was at the school (referred to in the first chapter) at Beachum. Harry's father had been the incumbent of the parish, and had resided there till his death. From this school Gerald had been transferred, at the age of sixteen, to the London University,* then just established, while Fortescue had been sent a year before to Rugby, having previously been taught by his father, and sometimes, though rarely, being allowed to play with the "Botherum boys," and often to invite one or two of them to tea. But the friendship begun in the playground and in casual walks at Beachum, was developed by visits to their respective homes in their holidays, for they were attracted to each other so strongly that their parents, having mutual respect, though not personally acquainted, could not refuse to allow them to visit. Harry was now about to proceed to Cambridge in the ensuing October, his late father's brother, a beneficed clergyman, and his guardian, having designed him for his own profession.

"Do you go down to Hartland to-morrow, Gerry?"

"Yes, as soon as you're off to Beachum. And there I intend to abide till the 'proprietary school in Gower Street,' as the *John Bull* terms our magnificent London University, once again opens its portals to receive my thirsty soul."

"You've got first-rate men there for your professors, whatever *John Bull* may bellow."

"Splendid fellows! Why, Harry, I never cared about those commodities, Greek and Latin and Mathematics, at school, but now! why those bare-walled class-rooms are like—are like—the temples in Martin's pictures. And then the English language and literature class! Oh, Harry, Harry, I think I may be furnished in time for doing something!"

"Aye, Gerry, I guess *you* will." But the speaker's countenance was shaded with a sorrowful expression. "You'll follow your own bent. You know what you want, and I suppose your father will let you do it."

"But *you* are precious glad you are going to Cambridge?"

"Oh, yes; of course. But after that—the *Church*."

"Yet you've a considerable amount of that sort of thing in you, I know. I mean Church notions. You have helped me, old boy."

"Have I? Well, I'm glad of it." And Harry gazed on his friend's face with boyish affection, and then at the far-off sunset clouds, till his face too lighted up with a glow of enthusiasm, and he continued, "Yes, I believe I could fancy myself going out to

* As it was then termed—now University College, London.

India as a missionary, or something of that kind; but, Gerald, I can't bear being tied up so tight." The last words coming out with a desperate jerk, as if it were a great relief to have said them, but an effort to do so.

"I understand you—the Thirty-nine Articles, eh? I don't wonder; but then, you know, I am a Dissenter" (with a slightly self-satisfied air).

"Well, that, too, has always seemed to me so strange. I fancy only shopkeepers and shoemakers being Dissenters. And your father keeps his carriage; and you go back to the Conquest with your Kentish ancestors, don't you? But are not Dissenters generally horribly vulgar folk?"

"They *are* rather a queer set, I confess, though I don't see much of them. And their ministers seem to me generally dreadfully snobbish.* If *you* don't like being a clergyman—bah! I wouldn't be one of our ministers for six thousand a year. They are very learned, I believe; and, what is more than many Church clergymen can say, they are true to their conscience, often self-denying and earnest. But then the rich people in their congregations always snub them; and, in fact, you know, Harry, they *are* quite an inferior set of fellows, though, of course, with fine exceptions."

"Ah, it's a bad job either way," sighed Harry, philosophically. "No matter, we can do some good in the world without being parsons, orthodox or dissenting, I suppose." And he sprung to his feet so vigorously that the little boat quivered and rocked like a duck dipping herself. "Haven't we youth, and health, and hope, Gerry; and zeal, and"—catching hold of Gerald's arm with a grip like a blacksmith's, and grinding out the words in his ear—"and a will of our own, Gerry, eh? Can't we take the world by storm, and compel it to be on its good behaviour, eh? I *know* things will work out well."

"You have got faith, Harry. So have I. No, it's sight now! I can see (as plainly as I see arch beyond arch up there, stair above stair, right away into the very palaces of heaven, through that glorious sunset)—I can *see* the heaven which a man may make on earth, if he only keeps his soul pure, and his love warm, and his will *concentrated*. I don't exactly know how I shall go to work, but if a fellow can once get well trained and furnished, you know, only see what may be done to raise and ennoble the people by politics, or literature, or art! Harry, what a privilege it is to live! Tell me,

* The Editor disclaims responsibility for these sentiments of Master Gerry's, who, it must be remembered, was speaking forty years ago, and from a rather limited experience.

man, don't you think the devil may be crushed and the world subdued? May we not see a new and glorious era brought in? *Don't* old men talk a lot of stuff, and because they have lost their own enthusiasm, and grown worldly and selfish, try to make us as maundering and faithless as themselves?"

"Right, Gerry, you're right; and by heaven, we *will* do a bit of the work they have left undone. But it must be by fighting," he muttered.

"And see, Harry," continued his friend, "what means we have for doing it. Look at this wonderful age in which, thank God, we are born. How the nations are heaving and struggling. And here are we with the grandest means of gaining power—the power which springs from knowledge, and tolerably well-trained minds, and a divine ambition to bless the world. Here are we, pressing forward——." In the excitement of the hour, the young men were gripping each other's hands, and stood gazing, as it were, into the far-distant, glorious future. "Think what this wonderful Revolution in France last year has done, and will do, for the world, Harry!"

"Oh, isn't it grand? Belgium free. Italy soon will be—only poor, poor Poland! But she is sure to rise again."

"Certain. France and England must save her. And then only see what a glorious thing it was to get Catholic Emancipation carried at last! What a wonderful fellow O'Connell is!"

"Ah! to think of having such eloquence, such *power* as he has! What a royal destiny he will accomplish for Ireland. And then the repeal of the Test and Corporation Act. My father made a bit of a speech at the great dinner given about that."

"Did he? I don't exactly know what that was all about; but only look at this all-important subject of REFORM. It's rolling up like a thunderstorm."

"Ye gods! it will be a row! I heard my father talking about it with some great City dons, last year. He said then, the Whigs were sure to come in, and so they have, and now Reform will be carried out, like the Life Guards' charge at Waterloo."

"Hurrah! Earl Grey and Harry Brougham for ever!" Then a pause of enthusiastic meditation.

And then they chattered about Condorcet's "Perfectibility of Man," and Jeremy Bentham, James Mill, and Macaulay, the *Westminster Review* and *Morning Chronicle*, Lord John and the *Examiner*. But of the dearest idol in his secret soul Gerald spoke not. A certain mad and passionate adoration of Lord Byron and his poetry, which possessed our Gerald, was a thing too sacred even for Harry's ears—though, as we have seen, Harry suspected

it. Besides, in company with his friend, the desire to communicate good of some kind to others always seemed to overpower the Byronic mania of seeking good things for himself.

"Do you remember," he soon began, "that first sonnet of Wordsworth's on Milton (the only thing of his I do admire), 'England hath need of Thee'? Oh, if one *could* be to England—to the world—what"—and his voice faltered, and the eyes which Harry glanced at were moistened, as they gazed long and yearningly away to the far west, from which the brilliant colouring had faded, but where a faint glow yet remained.

The silence was broken by Gerald. "Harry," quoth he, in solemn sententious tones, "I—am—afraid—you are a bit of—a—ninny. I'm sure—I am."

"You're more like a villain!" growled Fortescue; "a double-dyed, sacrilegious villain! Has all faith and reverence fled?"

'Must *we* but laugh o'er noblest themes?
Must *we* but mock?—Our fathers bled.'

Oh! thou perplexing boy, why wilt thou scoff when——"

"Spare me, my Cato!" cried Gerry, wincing. "We mean far better than we act. Ye gods! bear witness!" And this time he was in earnest.

Thus talking, then, the pleasant evening hours slipped away, and the bright moonlight at length shining in a broad, sparkling path upon the river, warned them it was time to be turning homewards. Reluctantly they pulled up their little grappling-iron, and dipping their oars in the stream were soon shooting rapidly down the returning current. It had been a very memorable evening for them both—one of those fair landing-stages in the upward journey of Life to which most of us can look back through the long vista of years, and which often exert more influence on our character and destiny than events of a much more marked or apparently striking nature.

"Now, Gerry, boy," said Fortescue, as soon as they were fairly under way, "crown my bliss with a touch of the nightingale, will you?"

Gerry flung out his notes on the moonlight air, sometimes very softly and anon rising into a rich volume of sound that went floating away far and wide, while their oars kept time. Now it was an original improvisation, and then some dear old familiar strain. And wherever they came, people along the banks stopped their work, their play, or their talk, to listen; and some cried, "Bravo! *angcore!*" and as the notes died away in the distance, others turned

again to their occupation with a sigh that the pure, sweet joy which had held them for a moment was gone.

"You can't think, Gerry," said Harry, turning round and looking into his friend's glowing face, "how very glad your singing always makes me, all the more that the gladness and the beauty come from you, old fellow."

"You can't think how glad I am that I can do anything that makes you jolly, King Hal," responded Gerry, with his heart in his eyes. Theirs was a romantic friendship, not so unusual as some may think, yet not met with every day.

Most of the Westminster boats had returned some time before. Steady pulling had at length stopped the songs. Only the distant, softened hum of the great city, and the rapid, regular dash of their own oars, with here and there a hoarse bargeman's call, or the far-off rattling of an anchor-chain, broke the silence that hung over the river. But as they neared Putney Bridge they became aware of a boat splashing ahead of them, and presently discerned a four-oared cutter, making for one of the centre arches.

"Look at those fellows," said Gerald (who as bow oar was more engaged on the look-out than his companion). "Did you ever see such a set of louts? They'll make a mull of it at the bridges, I rather imagine."

"Why, it's our old friends," replied Harry. "There's surly Jack, I'm positive; and there's our nice curly-headed Adonis. But they are regularly beat. The dear little coxswain seems hearty, however, to judge by his frantic vibrations. He is evidently convinced the boat will move by the vigorous swaying of his majestic corporation. But by the powers, Gerry, they are missing the arch! Hark, how they are jawing! Good heavens, they're against the pier! I thought so—there they go!" and a frantic cry for help, mingled with oaths and volleys of abuse went up from the ill-fated crew as the rushing flood bore them up on the piers of the bridge, whence their cranky craft speedily capsized. It remained a second or two jammed up against the piles, and then rapidly drifted through the arch, bottom upwards. Two of the five men could be seen in the moonlight clinging to the piers.

"Hold on for five minutes," exclaimed Fortescue to these last men, "boat's coming!"—for he heard the splash of a Putney boat putting off. "Now, Gerry, through the arch for your life!" and away they went under the darkness out into the clear moonlight again, and just ahead of them there was the drifting cutter, two men clinging to it, the third, clutching convulsively at the rudder, missed his grasp, and sank as the friendly wherry came up.

"Back water!" roared Harry, "there, throw yourself on the other gunwale, while I make a grab at him. 'Tis Curly-haired, I vow! Hurrah! here he comes. Missed him, by Jove! Now hold on, Gerry. I must pop after him." Off went coat and boots, and away went Harry from the wherry's bow, shooting clear down, head foremost, into the muddy tide, which was bearing everything along at a tremendous pace. Gerald's cheek paled, and he kept asking himself why he hadn't got the start of his friend and taken a header before him; but he trusted in that friend's cool courage and skill, and he knew he could now do nothing but keep the boat ready to dart to the spot where Harry's head might first appear. This was no easy matter, from the extreme awkwardness of handling both great oars in the narrow boat, but, to his infinite delight and thankfulness, he soon saw his friend rising up a few yards ahead, supporting the insensible body of the drowning man with one arm, while he grasped Gerry's extended oar with the other.

"All right, my boy," remarked Fortescue, as quietly as if they had been at whist. "All the sense, though, is soaked out of him, luckily, or we should neither of us have seen the light again. We'll soon bring him round."

At no slight risk to all parties the poor fellow was bundled into the wherry, and while Gerald pulled for the shore, Harry rubbed and chafed the life back into the dripping body.

By this time the Putney boatmen, having rescued the two men on the piers, had pulled down to the other two unfortunate navigators who still clung to the drifting cutter. The poor little coxswain's strength seemed nearly exhausted, but despair gave him new energy, and as he heard the sound of oars, he suddenly began shouting, "Help! help! murder! fire! my gov'nor will—give any fellow who——" The rest of the promise was cut short, for just as the Putney boatmen were within an oar's length of him, his grasp on the capsized boat relaxed. One more cry, "Help! help! the gov'nor will give—bub—bub—bub"—and the poor little fellow's last words were lost in the gurgling waters ere Harry, Gerry, or the boatmen could catch hold of him.

But these last-named individuals were equal to the occasion. "Will he, then?" cried the hearty, gruff voice of one of the pair. "Will the gov'nor do the handsome? Why, then of coorse——" and in the twinkling of an eye, as one used to such little diversions, that amphibious animal just soused into the water, holding on to the gunwale with one hand, and easily grabbing the coxswain's jacket with the other, while his mate

balanced the wherry on the other side. Then shifting himself and his burden along its side, he rolled the half-senseless youth into the stern sheets, and as he dexterously pitched himself in after him, he finished the sentence (winking at Harry) by addressing the luckless navigator thus :

"Your respectable father, sir, I've no doubt, will tell us chaps as how we've made a mistake, and will hobserve, drowning's better nor a halter. No matter, young gentleman, you'll live an honest life, sir, arter this, won't ye? and not forget poor Jack; bless you, mother's darling," whereupon his honest face broadened in the moonlight into a comical grin, and Harry burst into a ringing laugh.

"Don't forget the bilious gentleman on the keel, Jacob," quoth he, in a stage whisper, to the boatman. "And now for warm beds at the 'Dog and Duck,' and a stiff glass of brandy-and-water. Pull with a will, Gerry lad, for it'll be warmer there than here."

In half-an-hour—with the exception of poor Curly-head, who was snoozing uncomfortably between hot blankets upstairs—the whole party, wrapped in divers (no pun meant) strange garments, were talking and laughing over the adventure in the snug bar-room appertaining to mine host of the "Dog and Duck," with a grand supper and a bowl of punch before them: coxswain unduly excited; bilious man as near the confines of hilarity as it was given him to approach; Harry and Gerald affable and humorous, but slightly dignified and abstemious; the remaining two in a cheerful but somewhat cynical state of mind, evidently habitual.

The boatmen having been summoned to drink their new acquaintances' health, and then duly instructed where to present themselves next day for suitable compensation, the young gentlemen gradually grew more sociable over their tumblers and pipes.

"My name's Gaffer Fortescue," observed Harry, in a pause of the conversation; "and my mate is Gerry Arlington."

"Mine," responded the dark youth, "is Bob Nicholson, otherwise called 'Grunting Bob.' That," pointing with his pipe to the coxswain, "is Teddy Grant, otherwise 'Knowing Ned'; and the handsome young men in the corner are Sammy Pierce and Tol-de-rol Hackett, all of us great in our way, Ned especially. It's wonderful what a deal he's up to till he tries—steering, to wit."

"And some chaps think they can row" interposed Neddy's shrill voice.

"Then King Alfred, upstairs," resumed Nicholson, "and I are the stars of the Jawing Club in Gower Street, as our drowned

friend can witness. Pierce and Hackett shine in dissecting cats, treating 'resurrectionists,' and in small street rows. Where do you hail from?"

"Rugby. But where are you going, Gerry?"

"To look after King Alfred."

Pierce went upstairs with Gerald, and with becoming gravity felt Featherstone's pulse, pronounced him to be in a state of considerable febrile excitement, and sent the landlord to the nearest druggist's, assuming his position of medical adviser with a dignity worthy of his profession, and well suited to the blanket drapery in which he was enveloped.

Fortescue took Gerald aside when he came down, and asked him if he would mind offering to steer the cutter back to Searle's, while he pulled stroke, to avoid further mishaps.

"They can be trusted, then, Jemmy, to get home safe in a jarvey, as it's a bright moonlight night?"

"No, Harry, I want to stay with Featherstone. I don't think he ought to be left. Pierce says he had been drinking hard, and it will most likely be a day or two before he gets out of the mess. None of his crew seem to know or care much about him. So, if you'll steer, and give one of those watermen a couple of bob to take our wherry back, and send word to Featherstone's friends, I'll sit up with him to-night. Tell them they needn't come till the morning. No. 95, Portland Place, you know."

"All right, Gerry, you can't do less; but I'm sorry our last night together ends in this fashion. Can't be helped, however. Write to me soon, old fellow. I hope we may meet somehow—perhaps at Christmas." And he shook his hand affectionately, with a lingering grasp. "By-the-bye, Gerry," added Harry, plaintively, "give us one song before you go, just to show these chaps what we *can* do, if we try."

Gerald felt out of tune altogether, but he could seldom refuse a request of Fortescue's, and struck up at once. It was one of W. Mackworth Praed's exquisite bits of humour and sentiment combined, just in Gerry's mental key, and then first coming into fashion. Surly Bob and the rough young men, no less than supercilious Ned, sat for the moment bewitched. They had heard nothing like that for some time, they confessed, not even at Evans'. It was not merely the voice, or the tune, or the execution. It was something they could none of them understand, so they didn't try; but having attempted quietly an abortive cheer, murmured a general "thank you," and remained silent for five minutes after Gerry had left the room. Then

they shook themselves together, spoke according to their kind; and shortly after the party broke up and went their ways.

CHAPTER III.

IN the spacious drawing-room of No. 95, Portland Place sat a portly gentleman, who might have seen sixty years, and looked none the worse for them. The remainder of his family had retired to rest. He was evidently rather fidgetty. His watch lay on the table, and pointed to the hour of midnight. He wound it up—took up a book—threw it down again—walked about the room—pished and pshawed—and at last broke out:—

“Hang the young rascal! It spoils all the pleasure of having him at home, when he keeps his mother in a constant nervous worry.”

Just as the last words were uttered in Mr. Featherstone’s most emphatic manner, the door opened, and that excellent lady appeared in her dressing-gown, bed-candle in hand, nightcap on head.

“Oh, Mr. Featherstone, I’m so disappointed! Hearing you talking, I thought Alfred had certainly come home.” And the poor lady sat down, looking pale and miserable. “He must have had some accident on that horrid river. I can’t sleep a bit, so it’s no use trying. You *must* go to Westminster——”

“I! at this time of night!” exclaimed the unhappy parent, looking down at a rather gouty toe, and giving a short asthmatic cough. “Why, Jackson’s not gone to bed.”

“Jackson!” retorted Mrs. Featherstone, with ineffable scorn, “and your own son may be drowning! To think of sending a footman!” Mr. Featherstone felt extremely small.

“My dear, I mean that he can just go to Searle’s and see if the boat has come back. But, you know, these young fellows generally stop somewhere to have a little supper.”

“Ah! I know it too well,—but never has he been so late as *this*” (with an hysterical sob) “after going on the water,—and you—you don’t care a b-b-bit!” (fairly weeping).

“There, *there*, Polly, don’t cry. I’ll send Jackson at once to Searle’s, in a cabriolet,” and the worthy father was hastening to the

bell, when a gentle knock and ring at the street door made both husband and wife jostle on to the landing-place. Now, while the decorous butler proceeded to admit, as was hoped, this troublesome Master Alfred, Mr. and Mrs. Featherstone, with a natural revulsion of feeling, prepared a formidable magazine of mingled severe invective and tender reproach, to let fly at the offending prodigal as soon as he should appear safe and sound in the hall below.

But the voice of a stranger made their blood run chill in their veins. "Is this Mr. Featherstone's?" he was heard to ask; and being answered affirmatively,—“Because I just called to say Mr. Alfred will not be able to come home to-night—a little accident——”

To rush downstairs, eagerly entreat instant explanations, and put a dozen questions, to each of which they expected replies all at once, was the natural proceeding of both parents, in spite of a faint remonstrance on the part of Mr. F., having reference to his wife's costume.

“Oh! no; it's a mere trifle—boat upset, but no harm done—badly steered, sir, you see. Mr. Featherstone got a ducking but we soon fished him out. He'll be all right to-morrow, sir. A friend of mine, Mr. Gerald Arlington, is staying with him at the inn, as it seemed better your son should sleep there instead of coming straight home. There's no occasion to trouble yourself about him,” continued Harry, as he saw the impatient anxiety on the mother's face. “If you go over to Putney to-morrow morning, and bring him back with you, it will be much better, I think, with all deference, than disturbing him now.” Mrs. Featherstone felt bitterly indignant with “the cool young gentleman,” as she called him ever afterwards.

“Arlington,” mused Mr. Featherstone; “is that a son of my City friend?”

“Baltic trade,” observed Harry.

“Oh, then it's the same. Ah! that is just the right thing, my dear,” rejoined Mr. Featherstone, turning with a cheerful smile to his wife; “couldn't do better, Mrs. Featherstone. We are very much obliged to you, Mr.—Mr.——?”

“Fortescue.”

“Mr. Fortescue. Will you allow me to offer you any refreshment? No? And you are quite sure my son is going on perfectly well? Very good, very good, sir. Many thanks for informing us. Good night, sir; good night.”

“I've no patience with you, Mr. Featherstone; to be complimenting the fellow in that way, when he has been nearly helping

Alfred to his death—taking him out on that horrid river, and getting him into all sorts of scrapes and dangers.”

But after telling Jackson to order the carriage in the morning to be at the door at eight o'clock punctually, Mrs. Featherstone accompanied her spouse to bed, and both distress and anger died away, let us hope, on the pillow.

At half-past seven on the following morning the spacious mansion in Portland Place exhibited signs of unwonted bustle for that early hour. Mr. and Mrs. Featherstone were swallowing a hurried breakfast. A handsome girl, about twenty years of age, was yawning in an arm-chair, and a younger sister, with a pale face and dark hair, was making tea.

“Then I may go, mamma? Do let me,” pleaded the latter, her large eyes looking up with almost tearful anxiety.

“You'll be sadly in the way, child, I'm afraid.”

“Oh, yes, let Lily go, mamma,” interposed papa. So she went. Adelaide, the elder sister, having given all sorts of kind messages to Alfred, and with lazy gracefulness gone through the pretence of breakfast, betook herself to a sofa in the drawing-room, and proceeded to while away the hours with the help of the last new novel and the *Morning Chronicle*, her father, like “his friend Arlington,” being a staunch Whig.

Gerald, meanwhile, had passed an anxious night. After the rest of the party were gone, he dismissed the weary landlord to bed, and having armed himself with the only books the house afforded, viz., some Sporting Magazines, and the “Pilgrim's Progress,” he seated himself by Featherstone's bedside, and endeavoured to read. Bunyan's immortal work he glanced at with feelings of aversion, found the Sporting Magazines more attractive, but ended with taking out of his pocket a well-worn copy of the “Beauties of Byron.” The church clock hard by struck two, and was answered by Fulham, Chelsea, and the great, solemn, far-off boom of St. Paul's. The silence of which these sounds made him conscious was startling and oppressive. He roused his patient according to Pierce's instructions and gave him his medicine. That amiable sufferer seemed rather stupid and drowsy, and soon went off again into a heavy slumber. Gerald did not understand the warning given by his flushed cheek and quick, difficult breathing, and began to think he also might yield for a few minutes to the overpowering desire of sleep. He was just gone off in a doze—the tallow candle had a particularly long wick—the mice began to nibble under the floor, when suddenly Gerald started to his feet at a hoarse shriek from the sufferer, who in agonised tones called for

help; and, imagining himself sinking under the rushing tide, struck out frantically in all directions. Arlington strove in vain to hold him down in the bed and keep the clothes over him, for he was evidently delirious, and the fever was raging high, but to the young nurse's great relief, the landlord now appeared on the scene, attracted by the noise. To send his wife to help Gerald, and to run himself for the doctor, was his ready solution of the difficulty, probably not having met it then for the first time. The magic words, spoken up a door-pipe into the apothecary's bedroom, "Nob in a fever, sir,—'Dog and Duck'—half-drowned last night, sir,"—brought that benevolent functionary with considerable promptness. Had mine host put an "S" before the first word of his appeal, would it have made any difference in the alacrity with which the call was answered? Possibly. Human nature is governed by a mixture of motives, and is by no means perfect, uncharitable inquirer! as you yourself have good reason for knowing. But this is incontrovertible, and thousands of poor sufferers will say "Aye,"—that more good is done gratuitously by the medical profession than by any other class of the community—except curates and dissenting ministers.

With the morning light came peace. The fever was subdued. Gerald, exhausted with excitement and want of sleep, vacated his post to the landlady, and got some desirable slumber. He was awakened by the sound of anxious voices in the passage, and many footsteps on the stairs. Springing up, he saw a handsome, old-fashioned carriage and liveries at the door of the inn, and after hasty ablutions, and such feeble Adonizing as the circumstances permitted, he sallied forth to the sick man's chamber. At the open door stood a slim young girl. At the sound of his footstep she turned, and Gerald looked on a face that was certainly not beautiful, and yet that was not likely to be soon forgotten by such an impressible youth as the one who now stood beside her.

She hastily made way for him by entering the room where Mr. Featherstone was standing in thoughtful contemplation of Alfred's still flushed visage, and Mrs. Featherstone was bending over her boy with tender solicitude, and endeavouring to adjust the pillows.

"Papa, I think this is Mr. Arlington," whispered the daughter.

Mr. Featherstone turned, and with stately gratitude took Gerald's hand, pressed it cordially, and said, "We are sincerely obliged to you, Mr. Arlington, for your kind attention to our son."

"Very much so," added Mrs. Featherstone, with an effort, and in rather an austere voice; "but we would rather our son had never been tempted to join in these wild freaks."

"Mother!" exclaimed Alfred, in great excitement, "he had nothing to do with it, except helping to save me, and then sitting up to nurse me—he was not in our boat."

"Hush, hush, dearest; I understand—he was not of your party. Then he drew you out of the water, I see. But pray be quiet," and then coming forward, with a frank and grateful look on her handsome features, she shook Gerald's hand very heartily, and said, "I cannot tell you, Mr. Arlington, how deeply"—but the voice faltered, and Gerald hastened to say, in a hurried, awkward fashion:

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, but it was Mr. Fortescue who saved your son. *He* jumped in. I only rowed. But we were neither of us of your son's party."

"I am very glad to hear it," replied Mr. Featherstone, with impressive emotion. "But I am also very glad to have made the acquaintance of my friend Mr. Arlington's son, under circumstances that do him so much honour. But pray who is this Mr. Fortescue? We must convey to him our most grateful acknowledgments. Is he—is he—in good circumstances, may I ask? You understand, Mr. Arlington. Can one do anything for him, should you say?"

"Oh, no, sir; his father was a clergyman, and he is going to Cambridge."

"Ah, well, you must give me his address. We shall be most happy to see you, Mr. Arlington, in Portland Place, or down at Wimbledon, whenever you can make it convenient to accompany Alfred. We are only in town now for a day or two—and perhaps you could bring Mr. Fortescue? I am sure, my dear, we should be delighted to increase our acquaintance with these young gentlemen."

"Very glad, I am sure, Mr. Arlington," replied Mrs. Featherstone, nervously; "*very* glad. I wish the doctor would come. Leila, go and see if the footman understood."

That young lady's little heart was undergoing strange commotions. She had come, filled with a vague interest in the generous youth who had helped (perhaps chiefly) to save her darling brother's life, and had doubtless been watching by his sick bed through the long, dreary night; while she was by no means inclined to condemn him for joining Alfred in a water party, if he had not been inciting him also to wine and late hours. She had pictured to herself a tall, noble-looking youth, full of fire and courage, blended with womanly tenderness, and her first glance at the hero of her romance was not a little disappointed. She saw merely a boyish-looking, handsome young man, gentlemanly and refined, certainly, but not remarkable either for height or dignity,

and her feeling probably would have been expressed by, "Is this all, then?" In fact, she described him afterwards to her sister, with a rather turned-up nose, as "a beautiful, delicate, womanish-looking sort of young man, you know, Adelaide."

But when she stole a second look at him as he came into the sick man's chamber, she seemed to have a new idea on the subject. Perhaps a sort of second hemisphere or "New World" was being revealed at that moment, and came flashing right into her soul from those bright, dreamy, deep blue eyes, and the dark eyebrows and clear, large forehead above them, and with something almost like a shudder she thought to herself, "No, that is *not* all." But that mood soon passed. He looked so different from what she expected, rather boyish, after all, and insignificant. And had she not heard it was Mr. Fortescue who had braved death to save her only brother's life?

Then the family coach rolled away with its occupants, and Gerald set forth to his beloved home, with *his* heart, also, fuller than it had been for many a day. He wasn't a bit in love—but there was something in that girl's pale face and wild, restless eyes that haunted him like a spell. Perhaps it is not surprising that he only just remembered in time that he had to call at his Alma Mater in Gower Street, for some books to read in the vacation, which he had left in his little cupboard in the dull cellars, magnificently and satirically called "the Common Hall." (These, by-the-by, were the only blot on the establishment, at least in the eyes of many of the ingenuous youth who crowded its classic corridors.) So he wended his way thitherward, lost in profound speculations concerning the character, disposition, and general pursuits of the owner of those dark eyes, with the pale, classic-looking face, until suddenly coming in sight of the splendid portico of the College, all his enthusiasm flamed forth in a different direction, and he entered the spacious forecourt of the building with feelings of reverent delight.

Certainly the portico is one of the finest things in London, and—Gerald was only just eighteen.

When the young student had procured his books, he could not help pausing under the weight of the dignified thoughts, memories, hopes, awakened as he stood amid the silence and deserted loneliness of the place. Yes, it was true, as he had stammeringly expressed it to Harry Fortescue the night before—in that building he had sprung up into what Fichte would call "the Blessed Life." Not, indeed, into the Inner Sanctuary. Long and weary must be the initiation services for all who are to enter *there*. Yet into the

Outer Hall, holy and beautiful as it is, he *had* entered while studying within those walls. And as he passed the silent courts, and his mind ranged through the various apartments, he thought how, within *that* door, he had listened to the profound and far-seeing commentaries of Professor Mackron on Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato's Republic, and the sublime Phædon. Within *this* door, he had listened in delighted surprise to the acute and masterly expositions by Professor Clavis of Sallust and Cicero, Horace and Tacitus. How different from the dull school-drudgery occupied with those immortal classics. And then, above all, within that room, how nobly the great Cambridge senior wrangler, with his huge Jove-like head—"so like," as certain irreverent of his pupils asserted, "to an owl in an ivy-bush"—had taxed and unfolded his 'pupils' strongest mental powers with his Conic Sections, Quadratic Equations and Differential Calculus. There, too, had their Debating Society met week by week, and with as great an enthusiasm as a young Athenian might have listened in the Agora, he had witnessed, and panted for the time when he, too, might gain courage to share in the glorious excitement of DEBATE.. Leaning by that arch he had been wrapt in the stirring joy of subtle disquisition with fellow students, and amid the shelves of that large library a whole world of new and lofty thoughts had been opened to his soul. Aye! and in those lecture-halls, in that library, how many minds besides his have been awakened to a sense of the dignity of study, of learning, of being linked with the wise and great of bygone ages—awakened out of school-boy indifference, and mere happy, animal life, to a divine consciousness of the grandeur of existence—of life as it is when we take up our freedom of the glorious Past, and enter the Brotherhood of the Sages and Heroes of Humanity, bowing in reverential homage before their thrones. Yes, great is the moment when we first behold them dwelling in the Mighty Halls of the gods—still more when we wake to a consciousness of sharing their life, when (linked with this reverence) there stirs within us a divine ambition to be worthy of that Brotherhood by emulating their great deeds. For then to us the vast Coliseum of Human Life becomes not merely a crumbling Temple of the Past, but an arena for the present and future contests of Heroic purpose, within which innumerable witnesses are gathered, and where *we* also are to strive mightily for our crown of honour—a strife not for self-glorification, nor for brutal despotism or destruction, but for the common weal of our race, so to prove ourselves worthy of abiding in that Brotherhood of the benefactors of mankind for ever.

But mingled with these thoughts were yet more joyful memories, though growing out of some that were at once painful and humiliating. Within those walls had come to Gerald Arlington tempting invitations and descriptions which, from his peculiar constitution and powerful imagination, possessed no ordinary force. Coarse vice had no attractions for the young student; but to picturesque, voluptuous vice his temperament and poetic nature gave terrible power. There and elsewhere, during his brief college life, he had encountered those ignoble temptations which disgracefully beset the young men of all civilized nations—had been almost swept away by them, as so many are—only by desperate efforts had conquered them—but now rejoiced with thankfulness to know that he had come out from the fight with a clean soul, and could look back upon them with disgust, but without shame. No; not altogether without shame. With the image full in his mind of that young girl whom he had scarcely ceased to think of since first beholding her in the little inn that morning at Putney till he reached the College, he could not help feeling deeply humiliated to remember how fearfully strong those base temptations had sometimes been.

No wonder that young Arlington—revolving thoughts like these in that “London University”—lingered long within its precincts, or that when at length he sallied forth he ventured to mount the steps of the great portico, from which, being vacation time, there were no dragon-eyed beadles or gowned professors to warn him off. It was a beautiful day, and there was a strange combination of the influences of Nature and Art, of the Historical past and the mighty Present, for the romantic youth who stood by the lofty pillars and looked between their fine capitals up to the clear blue sky. Though London lay around, it seemed afar off, sounding only like a deep, stirring undertone in the solemn yet joyful strain that rose and fell in his young soul. It had been a strange happiness to stand on the sea-shore at Beachum, in play-hours, and watch the ocean in all its varied moods. He felt that he never could be sufficiently grateful for having spent five years at a sea-side school. The vast breezy downs there, also, over which he had so often rambled, and the spacious grassy playground, where during the last years of his stay he had strutted the hero of his dreams, and in the poet’s “fine frenzy” of egotistic enthusiasm had acted out in foot-ball and hockey the fierce struggles with which his imagination was filled by “The Last of the Mohicans,” or Segur’s “Russian Campaign.” Yes, these had been great privileges! But how wonderful, he thought—oh! how blessed the change from that mere school-boy,

chrysalis state to his present position! Now he had come forth into the world—the real, living, fighting, conquering, triumphant world, whose harshest struggles were but the minor strain in a glorious anthem—that world which had so grand a career before it, and in which, he doubted not, he also was to live, and work, and triumph.

But all things have an end. He must turn homewards, and after leaving the old stage-coach at the turnpike gate, a pleasant walk of two miles to the village of Hartland brought him to the great gates of Hartland House. Here a hearty ring at the bell brought not only the footman but half-a-dozen clamorous dogs and a bounding boy of fifteen to greet him.

“Ha! ha! old chap—come at last! I thought it was you. I’ve been wanting you ever so long. Such jolly fun for you. I’ve been getting the black pony into our little cart, and slashing down the lane and round the fields like mad. You never saw such a lark. Come along, Gerald, do.”

But Gerald was tired.

“Well, never mind; after dinner, if it’s not dark, will do:” then, as they went towards the house, the lad continued: “Oh! and what do you think? Aunt Carry is come, and she’s going to stay two or three months, so she’ll be here all your vacation. And Vixen killed a hedgehog last night, and Skelton (the farrier, you know) has given me a new beagle—such a beauty! Her name’s ‘Magic.’ And I’ve got down your boats, and rigged up the ‘Red Rover,’ and we can have some grand fun with pirates, you know. Oh! and by George, what do you think?—best of all, that jolly old King of ours has somehow or other asked for a holiday at Eton, and so I don’t go back to school till Monday week. Isn’t it prime?” and the boy capered about, an agreeable picture of health and happiness.

But Gerald didn’t feel so supremely happy as Richard at the idea. He had just outgrown the enjoyment of all that delighted the schoolboy, and he wanted to muse and dream, and read his Byron, and study Plato, and feel himself a man. Once, beagles were enchanting, and hunting with them was a passionate delight, when he imagined himself a North-American Indian, and revelled in a wild romance, just as the sailing his mimic Corsairs and men-of-war on the beloved pond was also invested by Cooper’s matchless romances with a charm of ineffable brightness, only fully understood in the contrast of after-years. But now the glory had departed, and he grieved to find he didn’t rejoice in the extra holiday. Richard was a good fellow, but he sadly put him out

sometimes, and was always wanting him to come here or go there. Then their tempers didn't suit very well, and Richard's schoolboy tricks and satire ruffled Gerald's dignity, and often brought him down from poetic regions and exalted moods with more velocity than comfort. Still he had, of course, a brotherly regard for "Dicky-boy," and Dicky certainly had a warm, boyish affection for Gerald. They were Mr. and Mrs. Arlington's only children, an elder and very beautiful sister, as already hinted, having died of consumption when the boys were still young.

Aunt Caroline was an unmarried sister of his mother's, middle-aged, and so charming a person, so accomplished and amiable, so delightful in every way, that to those who knew her, but not her history, it was a matter of great wonder that she was still Miss Tylney. However, it is an uncommonly fortunate thing for their friends and relatives when some such delightful creature is allowed to remain, what a friend of ours calls an "unappropriated blessing"—*anglice*, an old maid, and so to be the good genius of half a dozen family circles, instead of belonging specially to one of her own. Mrs. Arlington was still a lovely matron, many years from the decline of life, but she had never quite recovered from the loss of her daughter, and had "aged" considerably the last two years. Gerald was now in the place of the lost daughter to her, greatly resembling his sister in character, and *mutatis mutandis* in features.

Mrs. Arlington's life was in her affections, her imagination, and her religion—her character being well described by herself when she once said that if not enjoying intercourse with her dear ones, "she could always be happy with a novel and a sermon!"

But her sister was a woman of really fine intellect, and had made use of her freedom from domestic cares to cultivate it with great assiduity. Hence her influence over Gerald was at once elevating and strengthening in a high degree.

Gerald's father had made the Baltic and Russian business he inherited from his father a vast and prosperous concern during the great war. A leading city merchant in those days, when the tremendous forces of steam were just preparing to unite with the still greater power of combination of mind and money, in the shape of huge Joint-Stock Companies, occupied about as commanding and interesting a position as a private individual could well aspire to.

We must give a sketch of this gentleman, both for his own sake and for the influence he had on his son Gerald's fate.

Mr. Arlington, in addition to conducting his own large business, had been chairman for many years of one of the principal Dock

Companies, and of the largest and oldest Insurance Company in London, and had been hard pressed to take the chairmanship of the Thames Tunnel Company. This latter honour he declined, not having faith in its success as a commercial speculation, and not having time or money to bestow on an undertaking which he called "a mere plaything." But there was a fine vein of commercial romance in his soul. He had a noble faith in the triumphs of material civilization as subservient to the best interests of humanity, and the quiet but genuine benevolence of his character had found its suitable sphere in these mercantile enterprises, while the aforesaid vein of romance met with congenial *pabulum* in the marvels which engineering skill and genius were beginning to effect, when heartily supported by men of business and capital. He was, in short, something of a commercial poet and engineering philanthropist, though not much resembling either Byron or Howard, but writing his poems and transacting his benevolence in various "board-rooms," as well as in a large, dingy counting-house in a dirty little square in the heart of "the City."

Born in the same year as two rather more famous men, Napoleon Buonaparte and the Duke of Wellington, the great events and greater men of his period had exerted no slight influence both in moulding his views and stimulating his ambition, while the colossal magnitude of the scale on which Government contracts were made for oak plank and Russian hemp throughout the war, enabled him to develop his spirit of enterprise in a merchant-princely style, that would have rather astonished that esteemed ancestor of his who first left the quiet country-gentleman life of his Kentish forefathers, half a century before, to risk the cares and perils of a London merchant's existence. Manifold are the forms which both poetry and philanthropy fortunately take in this world. Certainly no one who saw the style in which Mr. Arlington would order a poor man to get out of his horse's way, or would deal with a vagrant, or a trespasser, or even with his unlucky coachmen, when caught in any dereliction of duty, could have given him credit for much natural benevolence of disposition. As for poetry, was he not for more than fifty years all day long (holidays excepted) in the City? But he was a man, nevertheless, in whom a high sense of honour and an unbending, sometimes most offensive pride, were combined with a chivalrous and tender respect for the fair sex generally, and his wife in particular; genial kind-heartedness shaken up with harsh imperiousness; genuine sympathy for all woes that he understood; and consummate indifference to evils that lay out of his direct path. Add to these, an iron will, a stern, hard devotedness to

what he had once seen to be right, though all the world stood aloof, combined, as in most powerful enterprising natures, with a slight weakness for the crowd's applause and homage, and you have the principal elements of this unquestionably remarkable man's character. A strong, brave, high-hearted man, one of the vertebræ—during fifty of the most trying years of England's national existence—in the backbone of London commerce, which some folks tell us is, or at that time was, the backbone of the world. No wonder some of us remember him.

Such was the man whom Gerald Arlington called "father," and who, as such, was pretty sure to exert a large influence on his son's fate and fortunes. We leave him now, trotting as usual on his favourite chesnut, with compressed lips, along the broad highway to the great metropolis, soon after 9 a.m., while we return to glance at his eldest son's occupation in the peaceful shades of Hartland.

Gerald had been explaining to his aunt that of course his father would let him stay at least two or three years longer at the London University, during which he should study the Greek and Roman historians, Plato's Philosophy, Aristotle's Rhetoric, Cicero's Orations, and no end of Modern History.

"By that time," he continued, "I shall have mastered the science and art of oratory and composition, besides having something to speak and write about."

"But how can you earn your bread by oratory and composition?" inquired Miss Tylney, thoughtfully.

"Oh, in lots of ways. See what large sums successful writers get. Then look at the wonderful power authors and orators gain."

"Yes, if they are men of iron constitution, as well as men of genius and indomitable will, with private property of their own."

"That iron constitution is needed by barristers and statesmen, not by authors. Besides, I shan't want much bread;" and he looked around him, and thought the idea preposterous of his having to turn aside from the loftier objects of existence for the vulgar pursuit of a mere livelihood. Was not his father owner of these broad lands, and possessed of wharves and timber yards "down the river," without number?

So they arranged their plan of reading, and Gerald retired to his study in a state of as supreme felicity as mortal man can attain to through the earthly media of youth, health, pure living, hard study, hope, benevolent ambition, and romantic aspirations.

"Gerald is a fine young fellow," thought she, "full of pure and glorious feelings, high purposes, but how is he ever to find his right place in such a world as this?" With much that was noble

and fascinating, she thought she saw in him no real increase of that iron strength so needful to success. She did see in him an overmastering imagination, a romantic lovingness, and an ambitious benevolence; but these were evidently combined with a feminine dependence upon the opinion of others, and a craving desire for sympathy. Above all, she discerned, to her sorrow, that shrinking from whatever did not suit his humour—from the stern disagreeables of life—which she well knew is a source of terrible weakness. Then his sanguine faith in others—ah! and in himself—in what the world could give him, and in what he could do for the world! Terrible disappointments she knew must be awaiting him, and heavy trials. “If I could but see him,” quoth she to herself, at last, “resolutely doing things which he didn’t like, but which he knew it was his duty to do, what a comfort it would be! And yet how well he has forced himself to drudge away at his studies since he has been at College. He has so many beautiful qualities—such a pure and loving heart—he *ought* to become a—what? I cannot say. I see negatives rising up in every direction. But there *is* hope in the College training. Two more years there will do much.”

Gerald’s favourite spaniel, disappointed by his young master’s absurd retreat to his study instead of going in search of rabbits, frisked about among the flower-beds on the green turf, and with beseeching eyes implored Miss Tylney to extend her walk to the fields. But Fan’s aspirations were doomed, like those of higher creatures sometimes, to disappointment. The lady was lost in deep and pensive thought, and passed on. As she mounted the steps leading to the dining-room, she heard her sister calling from her pet poultry-yard, “Carry, Carry! do come and look at my new silver-pencilled Hamburgs. They are such little beauties!” And Aunt Carry went, gladdened at the thought that her sister was beginning once again to take an interest in her feathered tribe, which had been unvisited for many a long day after her daughter’s death, and with ever-ready sympathy entered into all the details which had to be communicated. She was rewarded. A fine little brood of ducklings, while the sisters were conversing, rushed impetuously into the duck pond, and the poor hen-nurse, who had long brooded over them with exemplary patience, fluttered and clucked on the brink, with the feather-scattering distress usually exhibited on such occasions.

“I am quite as foolish, without half the excuse,” quoth Aunt Carry to herself, as she turned from the poultry yard, somewhat comforted (as not unseldom happens), by beholding the causeless sorrows of her inferiors.

CHAPTER IV.

"HERE, Gerald, is something for you," said Mr. Arlington the following evening, as he handed an elegant little note to his son. "Mr. and Mrs. Featherstone want you to go to Wimbledon on Saturday and stay till Monday."

Gerald's heart bounded with delight. This was the only thing wanting to complete his felicity. Mr. Featherstone took him down in his carriage after 'Change; and a pleasant drive along the Kingston Road, and across Wimbledon Common, brought them, about 6 o'clock, to that gentleman's country house. Everything appeared to Gerald of that exquisite tint for which our neighbours have given us a proverbial expression. The Surrey Hills, and distant Epsom race-course, with the finely-wooded rising ground of Richmond Park were seen to great advantage. Alfred met them at the door and shook Gerald's hand with hearty expressions of thanks for his "dry nursing," the other night, and made himself highly agreeable all the evening. Mrs. Featherstone was gracious and hospitable; Adelaide, stately, yet condescending. But Gerald meditated most on the staid, retiring, little body whom everybody else, however, seemed to think a personage of very small importance. Conversation on the great topic of the day—Reform, varied by music and singing by Adelaide; a game of chess with Alfred filled up the evening very pleasantly; but Gerry's own vocal powers were not discovered, and no particular opening was afforded for increasing his acquaintance with "Leila the demure."

Happily, however, for his success in that line, Gerald rose betimes the next morning, and strolled into the garden, which was bright with flowers and the morning sun. Following the sweep of the gravel walk, through smooth shaven turf and beds of flowers, he presently descried the light drapery and slender form of that young lady, as she busied herself in picking a few carnations and roses. It was easy to offer assistance, and then to remark on the weather. This was safe ground, as was also the subject of gardening; but Gerald grew more and more interested in the shy young maiden, and began to think it would be very delightful to make her communicative—so, with impetuous rashness, he softly asked in that flute-like voice of his, "Have you ever remarked, Miss Featherstone, the genuine love of beautiful scenery which Byron shows?" No answer. Gerald hastily glanced at his companion. She was lifting her great dark eyes, which gleamed from between

masses of dark brown hair, glancing at him with a curious expression of mingled wonder, amusement, and yet with satisfaction, that he should speak to her on such subjects. The situation *was* amusing, certainly, and Gerald's native sense of humour made it irresistible. Sentiment was lost for the moment in his ringing, musical laugh, but quickly regained its hold; for his companion, slightly colouring and yet just ready to laugh with him or at him, looked almost lovely. So he returned to the charge with ardour—

"Oh! Byron's poetry is magnificent. But perhaps you do not admire him?"

"I have scarcely read anything he has written"—(a pause),—"but I do like some poetry."

"Oh, I'm so glad," replied Gerald, *naïvely*, feeling at the same time that he had got on very interesting and difficult ground. "It is so delightful to like what is beautiful. What poetry are you most fond of?"

"I don't know. Alfred used to read some to me in the holidays. but he seldom does now."

What a stupid fellow Alfred must be, thought Gerald.

"You read graver subjects, perhaps?" said he.

"I am very fond of history," she answered.

Gerald responded with unfeigned delight. This was fascinating.

And while they were thus timorously advancing in their mutual acquaintanceship, some very sweet and precious memories were floating up in Gerald's mind, memories of the dear sister who was now sleeping in Hartland churchyard; for there was something in the quiet grace and subdued earnestness of the pale young girl beside him that painfully and yet most pleasurably reminded him of the beloved one. And she meanwhile was thinking of the warm expressions of loving admiration with which Gerald had spoken of Harry Fortescue the night before, and she longed to know more of the character and tastes of one with whom Harry was so intimate. Then at breakfast, Gerald again talked about his friend with eager admiration, and again Leila listened with both her ears. So that when he left on Monday morning with her father and Alfred, and she saw them depart from the drawing-room window, a close observer might have detected a sigh. "He is the first young man," said she, unconsciously to herself, "who ever thought it worth while to talk to me—at least, on subjects worth while talking about." Poor little Leila. She did not receive much notice of any kind, or get much companionship. She was not then either, by any means, in general, a very attractive looking young lady; too awkward, shy, and undeveloped, with pale, almost sallow cheeks,

and sunken eyes. But then those eyes! Gerald, with an intuition that did him credit, had been struck through and through with what poets would doubtless have called "a witch's orbs," wherein he had discerned the promise of a whole heaven of poetry, romance, and love. But Leila meanwhile concluded her reflections on his visit by thinking to herself, "My brother's preserver must certainly have a fine character as well as a brave heart, from the way in which his delightfully romantic friend speaks of him."

Meanwhile the days and weeks of that fair vacation sped brightly on. The mornings were generally passed by the young collegian in faithful study in his own room. The afternoons were occupied with the fascinating pages of the new prophet, one Thomas Carlyle, just then rising in cloudy splendour, and in perusing Plutarch's Lives, or the Waverley Novels, varied by dreamy reveries.

But at last, one bright sunny day, that fatal frenzy seized him that has numbered its victims by myriads. Under those magnificent trees on the lawn he has taken pen and paper and begun to write. Of poetry and songs he has scribbled various delectable fragments already. But that day he was impelled to begin "A POEM," the primary idea whereof was chiefly compounded of Manfred, Faust, and Utopia. And that which he wrote, though fantastical enough, was full of a weird, musical beauty and wild pathos, mingled with touches of humour, which gave promise of a power that might one day take captive men's hearts. So while that weary world was grinding on around him he kept writing away in his earthly Paradise, dreaming of love and beauty, and a mighty power to be wielded over the hearts of men, to lift them to a nobler life. Was this ambition, or a divine yearning of love and pity? or the instinct of genius? or the mere madness of egotism and conceit? Perhaps a union of all these. Time will show. For the present, let him sit dreaming there—dreaming as thousands have done before—yet working too—willing to work right faithfully evermore, *if only he might work in his own way.*

Then, when the inspiration ceased, this fortunate poet strolled amid beds of flowers across the lawn, down the park-like meadow, between beautiful clumps of gigantic wych-elms, to the lakelet, rippling radiant in the sunlight, less bright than the smile of hope and "young imagination" on the dreamer's face, as he gazed on the water and the sunshine glinting through the trees, and the white-sailing clouds above whiter swans below, and stepped into the little broad-bottomed boat and thought to himself, "How glorious a thing it is to live!" Or the afternoon might close with a game of cricket, or a canter through Epping Forest.

One summer evening, the fair wife of a county M.P., describing to her husband the round of calls she had been making, exclaimed, "Oh, but there was one such charming little vision—quite poetical—at that dear Mrs. Arlington's; her son, you know, who the girls say is a regular poet and *improvisatore*, and sings divinely, and all that kind of thing. Well, he was writing on the lawn, and I never saw anything more beautiful than the whole scene; and afterwards I saw him cantering over Wanstead Flats, and I'm sure I don't wonder the girls talk about him," concluded the lady with a pretty mischievous twinkle in her eye, whereupon her husband burst into a hearty laugh, and giving her a kiss and his arm, whispered "Bosh!" and then escorted her in to dinner. But he didn't laugh more heartily than Gerry would have done had he overheard them.

A letter came one day from Harry Fortescue to Gerald, which made him shout for joy. "Mother! Harry can come, if we ask him. May I?"

"By all means."

"Oh, won't it be jolly!"

The proposed visit of Gerald's friend was mentioned to Mr. Arlington after dinner. In answer to enquiries, Gerald replied "that since his father's death this friend had lived with his half-sister at Neville Court (that is, during the holidays), near Dorking, and Lady Baines, a widow, his father's sister, lives with them. That's where Aunt Carry goes so often, you know, father, and where I've often been. Oh, it is such a splendid country!"

Mr. Arlington smiled kindly at his son's enthusiasm on this point. He loved beautiful scenery himself, and felt with satisfaction that this at least was a happiness with which he need not interfere.

"By-the-bye, Gerald, Mr. Featherstone was speaking to me to-day about you. You seemed to have made a favourable impression on that circle at Wimbledon—though perhaps I ought not to tell you. Young men are apt to think sufficiently well of themselves without hearing of anything to their advantage."

Poor Gerry had a dim idea that he was rather the better for a little encouragement. Possibly he was not altogether mistaken. Passionately desiring excellence of every conceivable description, no doubt he was sometimes terribly tempted—goaded, in fact—to hope and believe he was obtaining it. But he was much oftener in a state of doubt and even despondency as to his power of doing anything well, or of making others happy, which was decidedly enfeebling, preparing the way in fact for the very want of success,

which he often morbidly anticipated. A *little* encouragement as evidence of their possessing the needful power, would sometimes be of immense value to minds of this temperament. But knowing that vanity and conceit are tolerably rife, and most of us being rather jealous of each other's progress, we occasionally omit to praise when it is most required.

Harry Fortescue was to come on the following Thursday. It is the Tuesday evening previous. Gerald had been working so hard all the afternoon at erecting an arbour in the grounds, which he proposed calling "L'Allegro," as a namesake of one at Neville Court, that the usual ride had been omitted, and he is gone to take it now after dinner under favour of a lovely twilight and the harvest moon. Hence Mr. and Mrs. Arlington with Aunt Carry are sitting alone in the drawing-room before tea. They have not rung for candles, though the room grows darker and darker. Mrs. Arlington seems bewildered as she looks alternately from the great trees seen against the twilight sky to the fixed countenance of her husband. His face has its morning sternness, instead of its usual evening cheerfulness, and the moon gives just enough light to make the tears glitter in Miss Tylney's eyes. But her lips are compressed tightly, and she seems resolved to say nothing till she can say what is right and best. Mrs. Arlington is the first to break the silence.

"It is no doubt very proper that Gerald should earn his own livelihood, and I suppose he must go into business, as you desire that should be his vocation; but—does it not seem a pity to take him away from college just now"—(a pause) Miss Tylney felt emboldened to speak.

"If I might give an opinion, I should say it was a very great pity to check him just when his mind is opening up to so many important subjects, and when he is really working with so much earnestness."

"Caroline, we should differ as to the importance of the subjects that are occupying his attention now, or that would occupy him if he went for another year to the college. I do not intend he should grow up a mere literary *dilettante*. He has not the abilities or stamina to shine at the bar, and no taste for the medical profession. He has not particularly distinguished himself at the London University, and I have no wish to try and squeeze him into Government employment. Why should I? Where can he find a higher career than that of a London merchant?"

"But he has received so strong a stimulus during these last two years, towards the acquisition of knowledge. You have no con-

ception how eagerly he thirsts for all this mental culture and information."

"And will he not have to study the finest sciences in connection with his mercantile calling? The science of a nation's well-being?—Political Economy—the laws that govern those great transactions of Production, Distribution, and Consumption, by which human wants are supplied, wealth created, nations raised to dignity and happiness? Look at that noble work of Adam Smith's. See what a position my friend Mr. Tooke, the large Russian merchant, occupies, and the admirable essays he writes on Political Economy. If Gerald desires to do something besides buy and sell, let him emulate such an example as that. I wish he may. I never thought of his being a mere tradesman."

"But Gerald has so much of a poet in him, dear," urged Mrs. Arlington, with timid affection.

"Ah, Julia, that is a very fatal endowment unless he be brought early in contact with the stern, hard realities of life. I only hope I may not have made a sad mistake in letting him go (at the urgent entreaty of you both, you know), for a second year to the London University. I ought not to have yielded, I believe."

"Poor boy!" replied Miss Tylney, "he will feel it very much."

"Oh no! not if you do not pity him to his face as well as behind his back. Just try and help him to see how far better it is he should buckle to at once."

"But I cannot," exclaimed Miss Tylney, with a vehemence unusual to her. "I see that of late all that is best and highest in him has been awaking, and now—" (her voice faltered almost to a sob), "and now it will be all stopped, and I cannot tell you what I know he will suffer. I would not mind that so much, but then he would get used to it, and not have strength to rise above the temptations to which young men are constantly exposed; and he will look for his happiness in low or frivolous amusement, and become worldly and mean."

"Caroline," said Mr. Arlington, very gravely, "has all that been the consequence, then, of my being brought up by my father to a merchant's life?"

"No, no; but Gerald has not your character, your strength—quite different endowments—my poor, poor boy;" and the tears would come.

Mrs. Arlington was much distressed, but utterly uncertain as to which was in the right.

"Say no more, my dear sister," said Mr. Arlington kindly, but very decisively. "My mind is made up."

Miss Tylney rose and left the room. Mr. Arlington soothed his wife, and again went over the arguments for the course he had resolved upon.

"But I have so looked forward to his becoming distinguished."

"I trust he will be—as a high-minded, enterprising, public-spirited man of business."

"But I meant as a writer, or speaker, or poet."

"Julia, Julia! let me pray you never to breathe such a wish again. Of all the wretched destinies to which a man could be doomed, such a career as you speak of would be about the worst, especially for a young man of only moderate abilities, and less perhaps than average health or strength. That *could* only end in wretchedness, and probably vice, however gaily it might commence. The life I shall make him live may seem wearisome and disappointing at first, but it will become brighter every year."

"So cheered he his fair spouse, and she was cheered."

"Is he to go into your counting-house?" at length she inquired.

"No, he would get too much indulgence there at present. He must pass the first two or three years somewhere else."

"Not away from London!" exclaimed his mother, in sudden and exquisitely painful alarm.

"No, no. I knew you wouldn't like that; and I have arranged with Mr. Grant, the ship-broker, who does a great deal of business for us, to take him. He will come home every night. Now go, dearest, and comfort your sister."

The sister needed it. She stood in her room, looking out on the bright moonlight scene through her tears. "Well! what a fuss about nothing at all!" exclaims some worthy Paterfamilias; "all this bother about taking a lad from a 'proprietary school' and putting him into business. Why, it is done every day, and a good job too." Query, what *is* worth making a fuss about?

Hitherto the life of Gerald Arlington had flowed on in regular and suitable development—suitable and progressive even according to what seemed to his far-reaching, nobly aspiring guide, Miss Tylney, the highest light to be gained. But now there was a new and very different element about to mingle with it—one that looked not suitable, "not developing, but terribly disorganizing, breaking the very back of his life—condemning him," she thought, "to a mutilated existence;" and this at the very period when he needed, and from the very hand that should have given him, the most careful training. "Oh! it was cruel, and very, very sad." So thought Caroline Tylney. If she were right, it was no trifling

error, rather a grievous sin, springing from blinded self-will on his father's part. To blight a soul's life in this world, no matter how humble its position in that world; to misunderstand and misuse a father's great and solemn power over the being and destiny of a fellow-creature, even though, nay, *because*, it is your own child's, this must be a very serious matter.

But was she right? Was not the father his son's truest friend? Patience, we shall see,—though, perhaps, not in this world.

CHAPTER V.

THE Featherstone family, young and old, were not the people to let Harry Fortescue's deed of heroism pass, uncommemorated, into oblivion. One day while he was at Neville Court, the whole party came down upon him in force. A splendid barouche and prancing bays, gorgeous liveries, handsome old folks, graceful younger ones, barking ecstatic dogs, all flashed upon the gaze of the quiet dwellers in the Court, and created such a sensation in the Vale of Dorking generally as the neighbourhood had rarely experienced. Then amid the with-difficulty-repressed outburst of gratitude from the papa and mamma, the haughty, yet condescending smile of the beautiful eldest daughter, the rapt and reverent admiration of the youngest, and the hearty, affectionate mirth of the rescued Alfred, Harry was made the awkward-looking recipient of a magnificent seal ring, with a Newfoundland dog engraved upon it by Alfred's particular desire, and of a beautiful book of engravings, chiefly from Vanderwelde, Turner, and other great masters of marine painting. Next came an invitation to a pic-nic on Leith Hill, and the whole of a bright sunny day spent by Fortescue and Leila Featherstone, in a state of exquisite madness, under the glamour of bewitching dreams; she lost in hero worship for the preserver of her darling brother, he over head and ears in love with her eldest sister, who walked with stately and elastic step in her radiant charms, amused and just a little gratified with the rustic admiration of her athletic young lover. Alfred Featherstone enjoyed the charming scenery with a genuine artist's eye, but found that telling Fortescue a little of his recent adventures was much greater fun than sketching. This last-named young man,

though not at all in a mood to relish the loose talk in which young Featherstone at first began to indulge, was speedily fascinated by the general style of the rollicking young relative of the beautiful girl he was watching like a devotee, and began to think there was a good deal to be learnt about the world he was living in of which he had not yet dreamed.

Altogether, as Harry walked home in the starlight night, through the quiet country lanes, with great dancing strides, from the "Red Lion" at Dorking, where the Featherstones were staying, and whither he had accompanied them to tea (his aunt and sister pleading fatigue), he felt that he had entered on a new era of intensified existence, through the potent spells of both brother and sister, though whether altogether for good he was not quite certain.

Very differently had the hours been fleeting past at Hartland on that well-remembered day. Gerald had come in to breakfast after a stroll with his dog, the morning after the conversation just recorded between his father, mother, and aunt—came in bright and hopeful as usual, full of life and energy, but he could not help being struck with the silence which pervaded the breakfast-table. Before his father went to town, he called him into the library, and in a few words, but in which there was far more of kindness than in his usual manner, Mr. Arlington told his son his plans for the future and left him.

Gerald felt stunned.

Over his misery and lonely wrestlings of spirit that day we draw the veil. He learnt the meaning of a few phrases he had never understood before, read a chapter in Ecclesiastes, and Wolsey's

"Farewell! A long farewell, to all my greatness!"

and something much more mischievous in his "Beauties of Byron." The iron entered into his soul. He thought with intense bitterness of all the encouragement his mother had given him to aspire and climb. Of his father he could think only with almost passionate resentment. Then Miss Tylney got alarmed, and took the other side, and tried to reconcile her beloved boy to his fate.

Harry came down to Hartland the following day. Miss Tylney contrived to give him a hint of what had happened, and to entreat him to urge the view of the matter she had set before Gerald, lest he might undo what little good she thought she had effected.

The young men set off after luncheon for a walk to a fine open common, broken with old gravel pits, and studded here and there with picturesque stubby hollies and brambles. Harry sought to

amuse his friend at first by an account of the visit of the Featherstones at Neville Court.

"But the daughter, Gerald! Oh the daughter!" Gerald had been so much more struck with Leila than with Adelaide, that he thought his friend must refer to the former, and a momentary pang of jealousy shot through his mind, making him answer irritably and hypocritically, "Stuff! she is a regular little witch, like her name—rather queer isn't she? What the Scotch call uncanny, eh?"

"Good heavens! Whom are you talking about?" exclaimed Fortescue. "*I* mean Miss Featherstone—Adelaide! A magnificent—"

"Oh, I see," hastily rejoined his friend, greatly relieved. "Yes, yes, of course—very fine girl."

"Fine! Nonsense—noble! superb!"

"A dead smite. I see, Harry."

"No hope for me, my Gerry, I am irrecoverably gone."

"Well, she *is*—uncommonly—I don't know what it is, but—" replied Gerald, absently, thinking of Leila.

"*I* know!" ejaculated Harry with vehemence—gesticulating in a frantic fashion, which emotion he was at the less pains to conceal, that he might brush up his friend a little and "scare away the blue devils."

Thought Gerald to himself, "Harry's desperately in love—so should I be, if—. Why not tell him what I think of Leila? No, nonsense, no more of that for me now. Let him be happy. I can be glad that he at least should be enjoying all that I can't." And with what he felt to be a magnanimous effort, Gerry tossed overboard all thought of Leila Featherstone, and drew Harry on to talk about the delights of the picnic day. Thereupon his friend ran on in a highly edifying strain, recounting Master Alfred's wild talk and some of his gay adventures. Under other circumstances all this would have had rather a dangerous fascination for our imaginative friend Gerry. But life was getting serious. He tried to take an interest in it, but it wouldn't do. He only felt annoyed at part, and disgusted with the rest, and after a while, Harry dropped the subject.

But by this time they had reached the open heath. The fresh bracing air stimulated Gerald to look his position fairly in the face, and open his heart to the sturdily cheerful friend beside him. There was full sympathy for him in that quarter—not as to the particular grief of being checked in his studies, for Harry had never felt that ingenuous ardour for scholarly acquirements which burnt so fiercely in Gerald—but in the general fact of his romantic

friend's being stopped in a career which Fortescue had once felt in his inmost soul, as Gerald had tremblingly sketched it, to be a very noble one, in which he had hoped to give the said friend humble aid, and to rejoice in his glory and joys, though afar off. But he had rather lost sight of Gerald's higher motives, and ideal visions, and wanted besides to bring him down to practical common-sense. So he said something common-place enough, about its being a great bore that Gerry should be balked of a scheme on which he had set his heart, and which might have made "a really great swell of him."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Gerald impatiently, "that's not what frets me. Don't you see how my father's plan cuts me off from that power for doing good which we both have so longed for? I've no talents for business, I shall never make anything of it, or rise as he has done. It's all nonsense," he continued (while every atom of Miss Tylney's consolation was swept away in the returning tide of passionate grief), "it's all a great miserable mistake—one of the most wretched, infernal mistakes my father ever made in his life!"

"Gently, John, over the stones," rejoined Harry, seating himself on a little hillock, while his friend threw himself full length on the turf. Now Fortescue had promised Aunt Carry to urge her view because he believed in its justice. She had a very convincing way of putting things, and he had a profound faith in her. But for all that, he meant to propound his own recipe first. So after a few moments' silence, during which Gerald exhibited rather painful emotion, he continued in an affectionate but hesitating fashion—

"Gerry, don't you care too much about all sorts of things? It won't do, I'm sure, to mind about *anything* in this way. Look here. I don't want to go to Cambridge—I don't want to be a clergyman. I would much rather go to the London University or St. Bartholomew's, and study medicine—but I can't, at all events, not now. What's the good of making a fuss about it. I must just do what I'm told and make the best of it. A fellow can live a brave, manly, jolly sort of life, Gerald, anywhere, I fancy. Don't care so much about things. What does it matter—anything?—as long as one acts up to one's conscience? If it's good, be jolly! and if it's bad, fight it!"—whereupon he squared up fiercely with knit brows. Gerald smiled, half-sympathetically, half-sadly, and then sedately shook his head.

"That's all right as far as it goes, Harry, but how is the world ever to be mended if all men acted on that theory? Has it not been reformed, purified, saved, by men who *did* care about things—

cared even to the continual wretchedness of their everyday lives—and cared at length even to suffering a martyr's death?"

"Yes, but they didn't mind about things which merely affected their own comfort and happiness. Nay, nay, I know what you mean," continued Harry, with increasing emphasis, for he saw that Gerald's choler was rising again, "I know why you *think* you are so savage at this break in your life, but I don't believe that your power to do the good you aim at depends much upon your going for a couple more years to the London University. I think you have the power to make yourself felt without any more of that training, if you take manfully the training which all the botherations before you will give you."

"But Harry, Harry, how can a man do his work manfully as you say, or make himself felt, when he's got a constant diabolical heart-ache, and when, as to using all the faculties given him, he's like a duck in a desert! It's wrong altogether. There's nothing so wearing and weakening as continual pain and disappointment, and I *know* how it will be with me—"

"Gerry," exclaimed Fortescue with vehemence, as he sprang up from the little knoll on which they had been reclining—then sinking his voice—"Brother, may I say one word to you, I have long thought it—perhaps I'm wrong—but" (a pause), "I'm certain you look a great deal too much for things to be all comfortable—and that's no go, at all, in this world—not for *men*! It'll do for lap-dogs and women, but not for you and me. Gerry, will you forgive me?"

"Yes, yes—it's a day of humiliation! Fasting'll come next, I suppose, and ashes; but you miss the main point, my friend—the terrible loss of power in after-life from want of thorough University training. All your discipline of circumstances, and wonderful strength got out of difficulties, and so on, won't do instead of that knowledge and intellectual skill which come from college training. All the greatest men—the men who have really left some noble enduring results of their work—have been men who have had a thorough scholarly training."

"Get out with that rubbish, Gerry!"

"Aye—but I know I'm right—mind, I'm not speaking of men like Cromwell or Columbus, who have wrought great *outward* changes, or accomplished immense material improvements by their discoveries, or engineering, or fighting, and so forth. And I'm not thinking of men of mere intellect, nor of men possessing infinitely greater intellectual and bodily strength than I have. I know I have not huge gifts in that line, Harry—but still I

believe I'm wanted. And what I mean is this. To move men *permanently*, as well as powerfully, you must have knowledge—classical, historical, philosophical. You must have music in your soul, Harry, not jarring chords of misery—music such as that with which Amphion built the walls of Thebes, and Orpheus tamed the tigers, and without which I believe no great spiritual 'CIVITAS DEI' was ever yet built. Then you must have the quick mastery of all your faculties, which only scholarly training can give, to me, at all events—command of language, and above, yet, with all this, you must have great ideas, such as are only nursed in solitude. You cannot make the world feel that you get at their *souls*—you cannot reach and renew—exalt their inner spiritual life, Harry—without all this."

And he again flung himself on the turf, and groaned. Harry, too, felt considerably moved, and for some time could not answer. At length he said—

"Well, but granting all you've said (though I only half believe it), see how much you will still be able to do in the way of work, out of the counting-house. You say you are not to be there till ten, and to leave at five. You may be at home by six in the evening, and get four hours' reading before you go to bed; and one hour at least in the morning. Oh, wouldn't I work if I were you!"

This was again a new and cheering thought to poor Gerald.

"And then," continued Harry, "if you become a great merchant like your father through determined effort of will, you will have far greater moral power than even he has, because of the greater difficulty you will have conquered in becoming so. And if to this you add all the mental acquirements and training which six years at such a school as old Botherum's and then two years at college have given you, and *taught you to know how to get*, and the college part of which your father never had, only see, Gerry!" (continued Harry, insinuatingly) "what you may not do."

This, and talk such as this, came with great healing to the dejected student. And it was an infinite satisfaction to find at all events that his friend believed he possessed the natural gifts and power to do all to which he thus exhorted him. So gradually Gerald brightened up, shook Harry's hand very warmly, girded up his mind resolutely to meet his destiny and do the work, whatever it might be, to which Providence might call him.

The following day, Harry returned to Neville Court, leaving his friend in better spirits than he found him. As they stood

at a corner of the lane near Hartland House, waiting for the coach to pass, Gerald said,—

“You have helped me, Harry, boy.”

“And you me, Gerry. I shan’t forget what has passed on one subject—you know what. But young men in general have very different notions on these matters from ours.”

“Some have. But there are good and bad among them, I suppose, even at Cambridge. We must pick and choose our company, that’s all . . . though I do wish . . . what’s wrong wasn’t pleasant . . . and that what’s right was always ‘jucundus.’”

“Now, isn’t that just what I said yesterday on the common, and what you half-murdered me for saying?”

Gerry’s eyes twinkled with something of the old fun that used to lurk in them; and as he smiled, half in confusion, and called his friend “a rascal” to hide it, Harry continued, with vehemence—

“Besides, then there’d be no fighting, and life would be insufferable! But here comes the waggon. My! what a seedy team! Bye, bye, old fellow. Keep up your cricketing.”

“Write to me soon after you get to Cambridge, that’s a good fellow. *Au revoir!*” And so they parted.

CHAPTER VI.

“MR. GRANT and his son will dine with us to-morrow, my dear,” observed Mr. Arlington to his wife shortly after Harry Fortescue’s visit.

At the appointed time father and son appeared, and in the latter, Gerald recognised the unfortunate coxswain who had capsized the boating party against Putney Bridge. A very lively, rattling young gentleman he showed himself to be—with considerable *mauvaise honte* in the presence of ladies, a certain vulgar assurance in his manner to gentlemen, a delightful confidence in his own abilities to perform whatever he desired, and a thorough good heart at the bottom of it all. His father, Gerald’s future employer, was a plain, business-like man, who paid Mr. Arlington a good deal of deference, but held his own ground with sufficient self-respect: a sincere, solid Englishman, who might have been dull enough in a country-

town, but having been for thirty years a ship-broker in London, was a shrewd and rather quick-witted observer of men and things in general.

Gerald was determined to take an interest in the conversation, and as it would be difficult to say in what his susceptible nature and lively imagination would *not* have taken an interest, it is not to be wondered at that under the skilful guidance of his father, the talk that night opened up to him rather an enchanting view of all the great and stirring interests connected with the port of London and "City" affairs generally, so that he retired to rest actually anxious to plunge into the vortex, and bear his part among the busy workers and schemers of that wonderful world.

Hence when the time came, and instead of being seated in the lecture rooms of his beloved college, he was perched on a high stool, in a large counting-house, full of clerks, and continually enlivened by the presence of bluff old sea-dogs fresh from the Baltic or Canada, or found himself traversing docks crowded with shipping, or hurrying through the long corridors of the huge custom-house, the whole thing was so new, and for a time so exciting, that he wondered at the intense reluctance with which he had received his father's proposals.

There is an irresistible charm, for most young men, in action of any kind, especially at first beholding and taking part in the practical business by which the outer life of mankind is carried on. And to have something actually to do with welcoming vessels home that had really been "battling with the breeze," on the briny ocean, to be conducting their actual commanders through the mazes of the custom-house, finding real ships to suit real merchants, and then starting ships, cargo, and crews fairly off to far distant shores, this, after all, was work worth doing, and life seemed to rise in dignity and value as the weeks sped swiftly away. The only drawbacks were, first, the difficulty of fixing his attention on matters of detail, whether at the desk or elsewhere, so as to avoid continual mistakes, and secondly (though this befell not for some weeks or even months) to avert his longing thoughts from all the subjects that had previously been gaining so deep a hold upon him. Neddy Grant was a very good fellow and helped him on with right good will, being well pleased to patronize the great merchant's son, and with self-complacent superiority "teach the young idea, &c." But it was rather a bore to hear him every now and then, chuckling, with that abominable laugh of his, over one's blunders in the "Long Room," or at divers erasures in "Charter parties," and in the "Letter Book." And in quiet intervals,

especially when taking up his books of an evening at home, or when meeting some of his old college companions, poor Gerry after a time began to feel a passionate longing coming over him for the forbidden fruit of student lore—an emotion not conducive to steady harness-work in Leadenhall Street. But the ride up to town on his favourite Gypsy, with the plunge into the whirl of active business, each following day, and administering sly doses of chaff occasionally, in his brighter moods, to the pretentious Ned, for a time dissipated these vapours. So that Mr. Arlington spoke with grave happiness of their boy to his wife and her sister, and confidently looked forward to his running an illustrious City career.

But the social and political state of England at that time was very dismal. Nothing but the splendid patriotism and determination of the Whig nobility and of the middle classes, the merchants, and bankers of London, of the manufacturers of Birmingham, and of the cotton lords of the north could have averted a catastrophe. But while the skilled working classes saw these wealthy men thus stand to their guns, *they* bided patiently the issue, and England was saved from the horrors of tumult and bloodshedding, such as had been recently experienced across the channel. The agricultural labourers, however, poor fellows, were not so well able to see things in a hopeful point of view, and wrote the history of *their* wrongs in terrible flame letters against the winter sky, under the instructions of Captain "Swing." Gerald read Carlyle on "the Signs of the Times"—pondered over the mournful wail uttered forth in the memorable "Characteristics," and moaned in secret as he thought that he was utterly losing the precious time of preparation for bearing a worthy part in helping to save and exalt his unhappy country.

Had the world been moving on harmoniously elsewhere, he felt he could work on cheerfully, even among clerks and captains, bills of lading and "light dues." But if "the times were out of joint"—if wicked selfishness, dishonesty, and greed were everywhere undermining or openly overthrowing the edifice of social freedom and happiness, if even his father's stout heart was losing its calm trustful cheerfulness, was he doing right in grinding away in his narrow mill?

Occasionally a letter from Cambridge was flung on his desk, and swept him away at once into another world. For instance:—

"Cambridge, Caius Coll.,

"Jan. 30, 1832.

"My dear old fellow,

"What do you think about it? All going on as well

as can be expected? Your last was a model description of yourself in a 'condition,' *i.e.*, in a state of industrious cheerfulness and dutiful devotedness. You'll be canonized some day, Gerald, to a dead certainty, under the title of St. Leadenhall Street. But hang it, man, don't groan over badly-baked pies in which you have had, and were meant to have, no finger. There are lots of troubles in the world, no doubt, but we are not the Almighty, and I believe aren't responsible, nor are we competent, it seems to me, to set them right. Work on like a trump, as you are, Gerry, and your flag'll wave over the breach in no time. (I've been reading Napier's 'Peninsular War,' and have half resolved to cut the Church, and if my guardian obstinately refuses to buy me a commission, I'll enlist as a private in the Dragoons—Coleridge did, didn't he?) No, I'm not come to that yet. But I do believe in WAR. Still I know the finest fighting is against invisible foes, and there's no grander work of that kind to be done, I daresay, than by a true minister of Christ—only—oh well! I needn't bore you with moral reflections. I like Cambridge a vast deal better than I did. I've got into a pleasant set, not too *rowing*,* but far from slow—several Rugby fellows. And what do you think? Alfred Featherstone came up the end of last term—wheedled his governor into it on pretence of getting my sage advice and admirable example. But, by George, he's a rum colt to lunge! He fancies every morning he is going to reform, and discovers every night that the flesh and the devil have got too tight a grip on him. Respectable dad's money is flying about like grape-shot among a storming party, and doing about as much good. What do you advise, sedate and virtuous Gerry? What wretched beasts young men are compared with their sisters and then I went to bed, for it was past one P.M., and I keep morning chapel pretty well. You'll want to know if I'm reading. I am—slightly. *Are you?* Or do you find sufficient to interest you in your 'Charter-parties' and toddling about the docks? I generally get breakfast over by nine, having had a walk in these magnificent Trinity or St. John's Gardens before breakfast. Then read, partly light and partly heavy, till two P.M. Then boating, or walking, or riding. Not much of the last. Costs a devilish lot, that fun. Then dinner in Hall at four. Have some one to wine with me afterwards, or go off with somebody. Then chess, or a novel, history, &c., or a supper party, and about twelve to bed. 'Pon my

* Cambridge term for "rowdy."

honour, Gerry, a man might do worse. The luxury of the thing is such a lot of plucky fellows—always some lark going on, if you want a lark; and if not, any or everything else a fellow can possibly ask for under the sun. Then the Union debatings are immensely good fun, and I mean to start as an orator myself some day. The boatings seemed poor enough at first after the Thames—but, by Jove! these fellows would bring gin out of a jack-boot. They make the grandest fun out of their wretched little ditch you can imagine, and make you put your soul (and body) into everything you take up, from an after-dinner chat up to reading for honours, or pulling stroke in the University barge. Life—life—tip-top life! is the word up here. Plenty that's vile and nasty, but a wonderful deal that's game to the back-bone, and in the best sense too. I've met with some capital fellows, and we're as thick as thieves, but Gerry, my Gerry, there isn't one or a dozen of 'em I wouldn't swop for the ship-broker's clerk in Leadenhall Street. Will you ever come to see me? I stay up till the long vacation, and shall want to see you very badly long before that. Been to Wimbledon since we parted, eh? By-bye, my dear old chap, and believe me ever (as well as you can) *yours* sincerely,

HARRY FORTESCUE."

Gerald had kept this letter unopened till he had to go out, which was not till the middle of the day, and so he read it finally in the quiet and classic shades of Trinity Square, after paying sundry dues to the dignified officials of the great Light-House corporation hard by. Poor fellow! The letter gave him some strange sensations,—a terrible longing for the wings of a dove to flee to the classic shades of the Cam. He walked round and round the square in a painful dreamy state, and found himself at last opening the counting-house door in Leadenhall Street, utterly lost in meditation.

"Now, Mr. Arlington," exclaimed Mr. Bramble, the head-clerk, in a sharp, impatient voice, as he entered, "where *are* those receipts? Mr. Grant has been asking for them twice. You've been gone rather a long time."

Gerald clapped his hand to his pocket, but only found the Cambridge letter—rummaged in every pocket—still no receipts. The head-clerk's brow grew darker and darker.

"Mr. Grant wants to enclose them in a letter before he goes on 'Change."

"I must have left them at the Trinity House," murmured Gerald, confusedly—"I'll run back——"

"Nonsense. You know it shuts at three. Are you sure you paid the dues?" Gerald was no favourite with this worthy man. His keen business instinct had scented out Gerald's weak points, and he already prognosticated privately to his wife a gloomy future for the young gentleman. "He'll not do, Mary—you may *depend* upon it. But it's nothing to me."

Mr. Grant came out abruptly from his inner office. Poor Gerald was hidden by the door. "Hasn't young Arlington brought these Light receipts yet?" he inquired, peremptorily. His looks were directed by Mr. Bramble to the guilty party. "Perhaps I've dropped them," quoth Gerald, in his confusion. "I'll go——"

"Dropped them!" exclaimed Mr. Grant, sternly.

Search was made, but the letter had to go without the receipts, to Mr. Grant's great vexation, for the captain to whom they were to be enclosed was to sail on a long voyage the next day. They were duly found at the Corporation House on the counter, when Gerald hurried there on the following morning, but of course, too late to forward. Nevertheless, the misdemeanour would soon have been forgotten by Mr. Grant, had it not been—only one of "a developing series."

However, there was a new source of delight opening out upon the young gentleman, and one which his father and mother rather encouraged in reward for his endeavours to become a man of business—viz., evening parties; and though Mrs. Arlington generally went to them with a heartache, thinking of the daughter in Heaven, she rejoiced in her son's joy. *He* was in a state of wild but suppressed excitement. At these routs and dances, fair young things went floating about in muslin and pink, with their swan-like necks, and innocent melting eyes, and ready laugh, and graceful steps till he was dizzy with fantastical and poetical raptures. What with the music, and lights, and flowers, and wine and late hours, added to all these charming feminine phenomena, no wonder that so susceptible a youth as Gerald found evening parties quite as interesting an exhibition of actual life as the captains, docks, and shipping—possibly half as attractive even, for the time being, as the College Lecture Rooms. Sometimes these parties were in London—sometimes in the country. But whenever they occurred, Gerald felt lifted by them into a fairy realm of existence. And no wonder. Those bewitching young creatures looked at him with no less curiosity and interest than he at them. To have danced and flirted with Gerald Arlington was secretly, sometimes openly, admitted to have been worth a whole evening of ordinary partners. He seemed to have the power of divining by intuition what would amuse, interest,

sometimes charm them; and while his delicate gallantry flattered them, and his humour sometimes made them forget all propriety and actually laugh aloud—"Indeed we can't help it, mamma!" was occasionally the reply to maternal remonstrances; "he will say such funny things!")—they often felt that he was really interested in *them*, was treating them like reasonable beings with souls, and not on the more usual Mahomedan principle as grown-up babies. Then he talked about poetry and novels "so deliciously," and sang "with *such* fascinating sweetness and feeling!" In short, with the fair sex he was universally popular. To Gerald himself the society of women was always delightful. But his imagination filled any society with romance. Each evening party brought new and charming mysteries to explore in the character of his partners, and supplied all the materials of a thrilling romance. Were not human beings, he reasoned, made for love and sympathy?—and happiness? Was not every effort being made on these occasions to provide happiness—pure and innocent—and not for ten per cent. or dirty fees? All disinterested kindness! Well, well, make what deductions you please,—smile as you will,—for a long time Gerald felt there was something heavenly about these dances and "routs," intensely wearisome and prosaic as no doubt they often were to a considerable proportion of the rest of the people present at them.

* * * * *

. . . It is midnight—the witching hour when graves yawn, and sheeted ghosts in gliding horror approach the appalled spectator. Perhaps so. There might have been graves, and ghosts and ghouls besides, in the world at that moment. There were ghastly sights enough, no doubt, to be seen then, within a few hundred yards of the house we are going to, especially if you had rummaged about in some of the dens and alleys towards Tottenham Court Road. But at William Featherstone's, Esq., No. 195, Portland Place, there was little thought of anything of that kind. Drawing-rooms and dining-rooms were brilliant with wax lights; rapturous dancing-music rushed and capered and twinkled along like a stream of rubies and diamonds; gay and many-coloured groups jostled and undulated about in all directions; smiles and flirting and glad recognitions, scandalous gossip and witty jousts, amiable small talk, and a few conversations here and there in hushed whispers, which sent the blood mantling to the cheek, or held it an instant in the heart till the lips grew pale; prosy old gentlemen fumbling over their hand at whist; anxious mammas and lively daughters wondering "if Mr. So-and-so knows

we are here." Ah, what a mad whirl a London ball-room must seem to a philosopher! But what business had a philosopher to be there?

A group of gentlemen stood near the door of the card-room.

"Will the king give Lord Grey *carte blanche*?" said one.

"What! to make peers? God forbid!" answered another.

"If not, the country is lost," remarked a third, taking a quiet pinch of snuff.

"England will have seen her best days if he does," returned the first.

"I believe that she is in more serious danger from——;" but she never heard from what, for the speaker was interrupted by a huge silver waiter bearing ices, and the music and dancing flowed on swiftly and sweetly as ever.

A thoughtful-looking, handsome young man, with wavy brown hair, not tall of stature but of rather *distingué* appearance, yet evidently more full of life and enthusiasm than was usual with young aristocrats of the day, was seated on the landing amid myrtles and camellias beside a very pale maiden, in whom you could notice nothing but her eyes and perhaps her hair—at least, if she chanced to look at you, for both were too striking to allow of other observations. But she had got an awkward trick of looking on the ground when in company, probably to make up for the eager restless freedom with which when she was alone those great dark eyes rolled about in all directions, but especially towards the pictures. "Is it our friend, Miss Leila Featherstone; and can that be young Mr. Arlington?" enquired critical old ladies, peeping round a corner. "Very improper, at all events," replied envious young ones, glancing furtively as they brushed by. "What can they be talking about?" He is remarkably eager and animated—she is certainly interested in what he says, but in a very quiet way.

"Oh, do read it," pleaded the youth with fervent excitement, fully believing the myrtles were nearly impervious to human eyes.

"Mamma does not like my reading novels," sighed the maiden, wholly unconscious of any eyes at all.

"But this is not like an ordinary novel. It is a picture of a life, a grand, noble life, struggling on through all adversities, consecrated to the highest benevolence;" a pause.

"What did you say it was called?"

"'The Disowned'—by a man of the name of Bulwer. He wrote 'Pelham'—very clever—but I don't recommend that."

"Have you read any of Schiller's works?"

"No—but I long to read them all. Have you?"

"I am reading Wallenstein."

"Do you like it?" Then the dark eyes rose and beamed in upon Gerald, as she answered earnestly with something of a sigh—

"Ah! that is worth reading."

Adelaide Featherstone came sweeping grandly past on the arm of a superb-looking cavalier, and scanning sharply the couple among the myrtles, she exclaimed imperiously—

"What, Leila!—don't you know you're engaged three or four deep?" Then stooping a little, she added, "Young ladies at their own house should try and be useful, not sit gossiping in a corner." Poor Leila started up, and, with a faint attempt at an excuse, hurried away. Gerald rose mechanically, felt disconcerted, could have sat down again and been sentimental, but three London University men came lolloping along from the refreshment-room, "talking to keep their courage up," and extremely glad to pounce upon Gerald as a less difficult subject to deal with than "all those girls."

"Why, Arlington, we haven't seen you for an age!"

"Stowed away in some greasy hole in the City, aren't you?"

"We've got some slap-up speakers in the Debating Society now, old fellow. Can't you turn in some Wednesday night? You don't go humbugging about the docks by candle-light, I suppose?" Gerald recognized the second speaker by his highly saturnine visage as Bob Nicholson—the other two had been his class-mates also. At this moment Alfred Featherstone, who was in all his glory that night, and had run up from Cambridge on purpose to grace the ball, came cheerily up, looking gayer and handsomer than ever, his flushed face and sparkling eyes betraying a little over-excitement, perhaps, which might have been safely dispensed with.

"Here we are! Teddy Grant, too, I declare! all except the hero! But we'll drink his health, I vow. I say, Teddy, fish out Pierce and Hackett, and come along; you are sure to find 'em hunting in couples."

"More likely at the feeding trough," remarked Nicholson, with his amiable smile. Down they all went, however, to the supper-room, which was being vacated by the ladies, and drank Harry Fortescue's health with more hilarious honours than would be relished at the present day. Then they talked eagerly over the diversions in which they had severally indulged according to their opportunities during the past winter, and tried to plan "some spree" for the following day, as they had happened all to meet again. Nicholson and Gerald, however, for very different reasons declined to join. The one would enjoy everything, and the other

nothing; but Gerald was in captivity, and Bob lived in a tub. Soon the music broke out again more merrily than ever, while three drunken dustmen (who had been duly enjoying the public-houses provided for them by the Licensing Justices) reeled past under the windows, and swore it was "a shame there should be so many blasted rich people in the world, kicking up such a h—ll of a row at that time of night;" and their wives sat watching and trembling for them at home, till the rollicking three flung open the respective doors of their miserable rooms, and then it would, doubtless, have stopped the music and dancing in Portland Place, for a minute or two, if the crying and cursing that followed could have been heard among that elegant crowd.

At length the carriages rolled up to the door, and carefully cloaked and shawled, deferentially or tenderly waited on, the fair young damsels, chaperoned by their mammas and papas, were handed to these equipages, and swiftly borne away to lay their tired innocence to rest in sheltering, happy homes.

The young gentlemen departed in twos and threes, some of them disdainful of cabs so fine a night; and gin-primed castaways lay in wait for them at corners; and Peel's "New Police" stalked solemnly along; and a dozen wretches as usual huddled together for warmth under the dry arches of Waterloo Bridge, and two of them, new comers, half asleep, kept a drowsy eye open for an hour or two for the chance of seeing somebody "a-pitching of themselves" over the parapet, "looking for damp lodgings, my girl!" But that night they were disappointed, and fretfully enough complained "there was no games going on now-a-days, things were grown d——n slow," and that "some of us had been done brown—that's all."

CHAPTER VII.

ABOUT five o'clock the following day the two Miss Featherstones were languidly reclining, half asleep, by the drawing-room fire. The shadows were falling fast through the February London fog. It was the hour when the thoughts of young ladies (and young gentlemen, too, if they have the chance) wander back with a soft and pensive longing to the memories of the ball of last night, and linger with a tender interest upon the looks and words of the partners of

their departed joy. No wonder if at such a season young ladies, too weary to read, work, draw, or even to practise the last new song, should just look in upon each other, that is, the more robust among them, and talk over the fairy scenes of the previous night, and compare their mutual charming experiences. The two Miss Grants from Gower Street (Ned's sisters), pleasant, stylish girls, taking as much after their high-bred mother as Ned did after his more plebeian father; and soon after a third young friend from Harley Street (exceedingly pretty and a remarkable flirt) happened to call in Portland Place, at the time aforesaid.

So they all gathered their delicately-sandalled feet, or fur-tipped boots on the fender, and commenced an agreeable chat. It was a great relief to them. They had felt a certain depression of spirits during the day, consequent, perhaps, on dancing with charming partners till three o'clock that morning, and to all of them life seemed dull and slightly sorrowful. Papas and mammas, brothers and sisters, were very good in their way, but——. But what? Don't be ridiculous and pretend that these excellent and exemplary young beings wanted to be always dancing with young gentlemen not closely related to them. Oh, dear, no! But sweet and pensive memories *are* apt to intrude when the body is weary and the heart is benevolent, and the shadows begin to fall at eventide.

"Adelaide, it was a great success," remarked the eldest Miss Grant.

"Adelaide, *you* were a great success," added the pretty young flirt, Miss Rivers, "as, indeed, I may remark—lest nobody else should remember to say so—I believe I was myself."

"Of course," assented the younger Miss Grant, "and you had some very nice people there, besides ourselves."

"That Signor Abruzzi is a fine-looking patriot, isn't he?" quoth Adelaide.

"Oh, do tell us all about him!" exclaimed Miss Rivers. "He is perfectly enchanting." Then followed a short account by Miss Featherstone of an Italian refugee, exiled for his noble devotedness to his oppressed country—"a Count in reality, but prefers dropping the title—may have to earn his livelihood by teaching." Miss Rivers vowed she would learn Italian of him at once.

"Well, I think Robert Nicholson worth two dozen men who are only good to look at," said Anne Grant (the elder).

Fanny Rivers. "Oh, what a confession!"

Anne Grant. "Not at all. He is sarcastic, exceedingly ugly, looks as if he never ate or laughed, except at his friends' expense; and if one mayn't indulge a tender reminiscence of such a partner, you might as well be——"

Bessy Grant. "Married at once." Divers other young gentlemen were praised or quizzed, till Anne Grant said—

"Talking of bores, did you notice Mr. Pierce and Hackett (I always think of them as one person) trying to talk to their partners? That is always my evening's entertainment, if I happen to meet them."

Adelaide. "No, no; I didn't notice anything about them—horrid creatures! I can't think how Alfred can cultivate such *bêtes noires*."

Then followed remarks on Miss So-and-so's absurd toilette, and the rather forward behaviour of "that Miss Smith. Surely it was time she had learned better, considering how long she has been in the habit of going to parties."

"Ah, well!" sighed Bessy, "*we* shall be old maids ourselves some day, perhaps!"

"I shan't!" ejaculated Fanny. Then a meditative silence.

Anne Grant. "Talking again of bores, as is my wont—woe to the victim!—I didn't see that extraordinary admirer of yours, Adelaide, who was so desperately *épris de vous* the day we met him at Wimbledon last July. Mr.—Mr.—"

Adelaide. "Whom can you mean?"

Leila (very quietly). "Mr. Fortescue."

Anne. That's the individual. How was it possible you could have a dance and he not be there to make us sport? Yet stay—I feel a shuddering awe. *He* never stooped so low as to perform a hop. Leila, my dear, you need not fix those indignant eyes upon me. Please don't—they burn."

Leila (pathetically). "Miss Grant!"

Anne. "Well, dear, I won't, for your sweet sake, if *you* protect him; but [*aside*] he is a bear, and, Addy love, one might do worse than—lead him."

Adelaide (bridling up). "Let yonder little one reclaim and polish such uncultivated swains. I'll none o' them. However, we did try, merely out of that gratitude which will impel every Featherstone down to the third generation to patronize him,—I say we did try, didn't we, you silly little Lily, to get him up from Cambridge with Alfred?"

Fanny (softly and timidly). "Is Mr. Alfred returned to Cambridge?"

This was *the* question of the session for Bessy and Fanny. All three visitors were dying to ask it from the first, but didn't dare. At least so Miss Featherstone felt maliciously sure. But young ladies frequently fancy all their young friends must be in love with their handsome brothers.

Adelaide. "Yes, alas! gone back this morning. Ah me! Papa, only let him come up on that condition. He is to read so hard!"

Anne. "That would be an interesting sight" (pensive silence).

Leila (gazing unconsciously at her pretty little feet). "I think it is rather suspicious that nobody has dared to mention the pleasantest young gentleman in the room."

A burst of refined laughter, mingled with gentle purring groans and ironical velvety cheers, the most discordant sounds in fact which such sweet little ladylike mouths could emit, greeted this rash observation.

Leila. "Of course, excepting our respective brothers."

"Name, name, name!" still resounded through the room.

Leila (much alarmed). "Oh, what have I done? Forgive me! forgive."

"No,—no—no!—Name!"

Fanny (rising and kneeling before the culprit). "On my bended knee, I pray thee speak. I've lost my heart——"

Leila. "'Tis Mr. — Gerald Arlington."

Adelaide. "You goose!"

Bessy. "You duck! We all agree with you in our hearts." "I know I do," thought Miss Grant, and perhaps Miss Rivers, to themselves.

Fanny. "Well, I'll say this. That young man would never suit my notions of domestic bliss—but—all my acquaintances say he's a poet and a wit, and dreadfully fascinating when you don't look at him. I fear I *might* become too much interested in him if I could only hear, not see him—indeed, I may hint that I am acquainted with several unhappy girls in that predicament. Well! I say I might care a little about him were any great misfortune to befall me, so that I were to become serious and poetical, and given to moonlight dreams. Further than that I cannot at present go."

Bessy. "Rather too elaborate a confession, my dear. Nevertheless, you have expressed the general sentiment, Fanny, with great correctness. He *is* dangerous and delightful, though, perhaps, a trifle insignificant to the outward view. I think he had better emigrate."

Rap-a-rap-tap at the front door.

Omnes. "Oh, how delightful! There's somebody else!"

Enter Miss Shirley (highly aristocratic and superior young lady from Berkeley Square, not quite so young as three or four years ago).

Adelaide. How kind of you! We shall be so much the better.

The gossip was growing scandalous. Pray, be seated. You know Miss Rivers—the Miss Grants—ourselves.”

Miss Shirley. “Your circle forms the pleasantest spectacle I have witnessed since last night, Adelaide. You all look so cheerful, my dears, doubtless because you’ve been doing wrong. I went to our parochial schools this morning, and, being virtuous, expected to be happy. But I was not.”

Fanny. “Tender memories!”

Miss Shirley. “It’s too bad to make one acquainted for an hour with charming people whom you haven’t a chance of ever seeing again. Well, my dear, who was the last victim?”

Fanny. “That alarmingly fascinating being whom I heard quoting Byron to you in the refreshment room—Mr. Arlington, the poet.”

Miss Shirley (clasping her hands tragically over her face). “Oh, Fanny! it is my fate!”

Fanny. “Don’t—I am beginning to cry.”

Miss Shirley (recovering her natural simplicity). “There! of folly, enough. If you have been maligning him——”

Leila (timidly and imploringly). “You will defend him, dear Miss Shirley, won’t you?”

Miss Shirley. “I rather think I will. He was the most charming partner (not engaged, by-the-bye, to any— —present—is he?) (looks round anxiously), yes, the pleasantest partner I’ve had, Lily, for many a day—alack! the men *are* so slow in general; your brother, Adelaide, of course, excepted.”

Adelaide (half aside). “Humph! perhaps somebody might like him as a partner for life.” (General sensation.)

Fanny (*sotto voce*). “Slow to propose?”

Miss Shirley. “Well, if Lilybell here, from more extensive observation than mine, can generally recommend him, I am inclined to say he is *just* the man.”

Miss Grant (unconcernedly, merely as adding to the general stock of information). “Do you know he not only quotes, but writes such beautiful poetry?”

Fanny. “Oh, yes. I guessed as much. But I’ve had heaps of lovely verses from lots of my adorers.”

Leila (tossing back her curls). “Ah, but you know he sings enchantingly, too, and makes one laugh—and laughs himself.”

Miss Shirley. “I can bear witness that he has an alarmingly sweet and musical voice, Lily, and when he whispers soft beautiful dreams in one’s ear—ah! (sighs). Now, Fanny, just go on talking, will you?—as fast as you can—it’s the pace that kills, as my brother

remarks—I want to confess privately to Adelaide that I came on purpose to learn all I could about that young man. You see, my love (to Adelaide), it was rather an event in my life. I was talking languidly to that great guardsman—what’s his name—Captain Sheldrake—dreadfully slow, of course—when I noticed just before me what seemed rather an ordinary young gentleman, with his back towards me, when suddenly he turned and looked right at me—stared, I should have said, concerning anybody else. And then, Leila, I felt I was being blinded. His looks positively dazzled me. He was just answering his companion with a half-playful smile, yet in a half-sighing sort of way.” (Suppressed titter from Fanny and Bessy.) “Yes, you may laugh, little people, but I told you, you were not to listen—never mind—it relieves your feelings, my dears, to laugh—and mine to talk about it. For oh! that smile, Adelaide—I assure you I never saw its fellow; yet I fear he’s juvenile. Tell me quick, who is he? What is he? Where does he come from? You are sure he’s not appropriated? I’m glad we’re in the dark.” (But Leila saw she was blushing.)

Adelaide (taking Miss Shirley’s little hand caressingly). “My poor, beautiful darling, and all of you dear lovely ones, I compassionate you from the depths of my heart. I couldn’t speak before, you were so deliciously candid and ridiculous. But I believe Mr. Gerald Arlington is engaged.”

More than one young heart round that cheery fire stopped for an instant at this announcement, playful as had been their raillery, then fluttered on painfully. After a brief pause Miss Shirley spoke (with well-feigned coolness, but as Leila felt sure, with real emotion). “Very well, then, I shall go in for a nunnery and old maidenhood” (whispering *Adelaide*, but so that *Grace* could hear). “You are right to tell us. Honestly, that man is the only one I ever met worth caring about. What a pity he’s such a mere boy.”

Fanny (seriously). “If he really is engaged, and won’t emigrate, then it is not safe to let him go about loose. He ought to be tied up. But” (to herself), “after all, Mr. Alfred for me.”

Three or four faintly clapped their hands in would-be mischievous glee, *Bessie Grant* exclaiming—

“Fiddle-de-dee! you’re as silly as three! But—you are caught, too, Nanny.”

“That is possible,” replied Miss Grant, with mild dignity; “but if I sum up and give judgment, I venture to remark that from all I see and hear of the young man in question, Gerald Arlington is an individual whom no young lady with good taste could help being

charmed with—and—and”—(she exclaimed, as the derisive cheers re-commenced) “and whom no girl need be ashamed of admiring.” (Cries of “Bravo!” “hear, hear!” “go on again!” &c., from all parts of the circle.) But at this juncture Mrs. Featherstone entered, with a stately smile of greeting, and thereupon the conclave soon broke up, at once saddened and comforted, returning to their homes and rooms to meditate on the “Vanity of Human Wishes.”

“Who told you Mr. Gerald Arlington is engaged, Adelaide?” inquired Leila that night as they were brushing their back hair.

“Oh, nobody in particular, my dear,” replied her sister. “But, you see, it’s always best when young ladies are too much fascinated to let them think the dangerous one is not to be had.”

“Oh!” said Leila, rather shocked, but not unused to such replies.

“Besides,” continued Adelaide, in a more exculpatory tone, “I have heard it hinted at in several quarters. Why? do you suffer?”

“By no means,” responded Leila, calmly, her thoughts wandering dreamily to the banks of the Cam, and picturing sometimes her darling brother, sometimes that brother’s preserver. But they came back to Miss Shirley, of whom she thought, with a tender and reverent compassion somewhat resembling that she felt for Ellen Fortescue, and sighing, she fell asleep.

CHAPTER VIII.

As good (or ill) luck would have it, soon after the entertainment described in the last chapter, Gerry was invited to dine at Mr. Grant’s; that gentleman, be it remembered, residing in Gower Street. It was a pleasant, sensible family circle, quiet enough, but for the enlivening power of Master Ned, who being up to everything, and knowing a great deal more than everybody else, prevented any specially discreditable amount of ignorance or dulness accumulating in the social circles, whether domestic or general, wherein he moved. His two amiable and sprightly sisters felt a friendly interest in him, which perhaps blinded them somewhat to his infirmities, though occasionally, it must be confessed, they laughed at, as well as with him. Mrs. Grant, fortunately, possessed a high opinion of his moral and intellectual qualities, while

two or three little brothers and sisters loved him heartily and believed in him entirely.

There was purposely no company, that all parties might become better acquainted. Gerald had been highly entertaining at dinner-time, and when the ladies had retired to the drawing room, their conversation naturally turned on the agreeable qualities of their father's guest and clerk. But, downstairs, alas! Mr. Grant was unconsciously overtaken in his usual nap. Gerry had been fidgetting restlessly on his chair, refusing the wine Ned pressed upon him, when he suddenly observed, in an under-tone, "Do you know, Ned, this is Wednesday evening?"

"Well," responded the sagacious Ned, "I didn't urge the contrary."

"And it's the University Debating Society's night," continued Gerry; "did you ever go there?"

"I should just think I have, too; Freddy Featherstone took me once. But they're a sad set of muffs, you know."

"Are you inclined just to look in for a minute before tea? I can introduce you."

"Like it of all things, my boy; come along."

Fatal enjoyment for poor foolish Gerry! The old college mania came rushing over him—sweeping all before it, as he entered the well-remembered hall, and first right-hand lecture-room. He saw the room crowded with eager, animated youthful faces, and received sundry nods of recognition, and silent shakes of the hand, and listened to the masterly, albeit juvenile efforts of the leading speakers. It was a debate on Lord (then Mr.) Grey's Reform Bill of 1808. Speaker after speaker drew forth his stores of historical and constitutional lore. Patriotic sentiments, classical allusions, impetuous appeals, stirred up thrilling memories or made answering echoes in other hearts besides Gerald's. It was a period of intense political excitement—such as had hardly been known since the day when France had once before shaken Europe from centre to circumference. And it was excitement of the same wild, hopeful kind. The ardent dreamers of glorious visions, filled with all the brightest scenes and forms that Liberty and Philanthropy can jointly generate, had not then seen the end of Louis Philippe. They only knew that once again in the history of Despotism there were magnificent opportunities opening up for brave hearts to win their country's freedom and right the wrongs of their oppressed brothers—and earn deathless fame for themselves. Education was one of the great watch-words of the day. The foremost men in every rank of the educated classes, who had long been eminent in various ways

for the promotion of all liberal measures and reforms, members of the peerage and the House of Commons—barristers, merchants, solicitors, and physicians, men high in science, literature, politics, and art, had come forward, under the leadership of Henry Brougham, to establish “The University of London,” as a nursery for the aspiring youths who, untrammelled by “Thirty-nine Articles,” were to lead the van of Progress and Reform when their noble sires should be gathered to their rest. Hence, in the class-rooms of that classic building, whither Gerald and his companion had turned their steps that night, but especially in the Debating Society, were gathered the sons and brothers of many whose names were then resounding or beginning to be heard in the great roaring world of London, in St. Stephen’s, in reviews, in the daily press, and through the country at large. Fired with an enthusiasm, and filled with principles or sentiments of the truest patriotism or the most demagoguish licence, which they caught up in the family circle, or in the gallery of the House of Commons, in the leaders of the *Morning Chronicle* or the last *Westminster*, the enthusiastic young orators of Gower Street rose with the occasion, and hurled their mimic thunderbolts, sported their biting sarcasms, or urged their kindling appeals with an ardour, and sometimes an eloquence, that gave bright promise of a noble future, if only these evident gifts were to be consecrated to God and Duty by a higher influence. Gerald was fairly carried away in a tide of rapturous—cynics would say, ridiculous—enthusiasm, and was only roused from dreams, too exquisitely delightful to last, by a rather squeaking voice in his ear: “I say, Grunting Bob came out strong then, didn’t he? but tea’ll be waiting.” Then—plump down poor Gerald fell—a thousand fathoms deep. No chance of rising again to the surface. The illusions of happiness that had at first gilded his entrance on City life had for some time been gradually melting away. This transient glimpse into the Paradisiacal world, wherein he had before been revelling, brought before him, with vivid colouring, all that he was now cut off from—all for which he hoped to live—and he returned to Mr. Grant’s in rather a different frame of mind from that in which he had left it. The ladies were looking somewhat eagerly for his return, but found him, though still interesting, decidedly dull. Bessy even went the length of wondering what had made him become so stupid. No great need for wonder, however, for he went back to business the next morning with a very heavy heart. Don’t laugh till you’ve tried it.

Had you been coming over Tower Hill the following day about

one P.M., you might have met a young man hastening down to the St. Katherine Docks with the last bills of lading for the skipper of a fine teak-built East Indiaman, just clearing out for Bombay. And it is very likely you would have noticed him. For is he not evidently a handsome young shipbroker's clerk, or something of that *genus*, in haste? True; but as he passes you his step slackens. He is thinking much more deeply than is usual with shipbrokers' clerks, and which he had clearly no business to do, just then. Why, he is actually standing still, gazing at the towers of the Tower, and now even at the light white clouds in the blue sky above the river. Is the fellow mad? See, his fist clenches, his brow is knit. He remains stationary full five minutes. What portentous resolve is he making? See, he dashes his heel on the ground, very like Rumpel-stilt-skin, and again hurries on (for the teak-built Indiaman, if kept waiting, might be easily provoked to swear). But his brow is cleared now; and if you could compare him with the rather soft looking, dreamy youth, who sat but lately among the myrtles at a certain ball, you would say it is that same youth suddenly grown into a man,—strong now (he thinks) in brave resolution, lofty hope, and purpose of self-denying enterprise.

"Alas, this is sad gammon," remarks Mr. Charter-Party Ledger. Ah! so it may be, Mr. Ledger. Let us hurry on.

It is only the shipping clerk of Messrs. Grant & Co., remembering what his friend Fortescue had lately said about working over-hours, and—*resolving to work*.

Work at what? At "bills of lading" and "charter-parties," "manifests," and "clearing out" documents, at arithmetic and book-keeping? We rather think not. Night after night the shipbroker's clerk began poring over Hallam's "Constitutional History of England," Demosthenes' "Περὶ τοῦ στεφάνου," and Locke on "The Understanding." He had never quite thrown such books aside, but now he took to the old game again in earnest. "This will answer better," said he to himself, "than going on with my dramatic romance." And he stuck to his resolution pretty closely. But every now and then a passionate fit of inspiration seized him, and the beloved romance was drawn from its hiding-place, and he worked away at it till far into the small hours. Especially was he liable to be thus overcome on bright moonlight nights, when he would wander about with a pocket Byron, and fleet far beyond not the "flamantia mœnia mundi," but the dull foggy bounds that usually hemmed him in till he was weary and sick of them even unto death—the death of his soul.

"Poor simpleton!" said Mr. Bramble to his wife, after this course of proceeding had brought certain results, "what on earth could make him fancy he would be able to read such stuff as that at night, after running about like a dog in a fair all day, from Leadenhall Street to the Custom House, with a raid into the docks, and back again to Leadenhall Street, then work at his desk, and then, perhaps, on 'Change with his master, or 'Ned, the Knowing?'" There were many shipping clerks, not a few captains and sailors, crimps, wharfingers, Jews, and emigrants, passing and repassing over Tower Hill every day, not one of them thinking about Hallam, Demosthenes, or the "Human Understanding." Why could he not be as sensible and practical as they? "Conceited young whipper-snapper!" Mr. Charter-party Ledger again exclaims. Well, when we see what came of his resolutions, both Mr. Bramble and Mr. Ledger will open their eyes wider still.

CHAPTER IX.

[LEILA FEATHERSTONE TO HER BROTHER ALFRED.]

Neville Court, March 15th, 1832.

DEAR BOY FRED,

You gave me leave to write. Nay, you actually condescended to urge me to send you a detailed scrawl, concerning this my first flight from the parental nest. So I sit me down to make a journal. Isn't it grand? Ahem!

Wednesday, 13th.—Arrived in this charming abode about one P.M.—brought by their carriage. Met on the doorstep by these dear, darling, venerable ladies. [They were certainly more than thirty years of age.] Oh, Freddy, they *are* so nice. But I know they must think me horribly shy and stupid. I do feel *so* awkward with them. I felt most at ease, that is, just at first, with the comfortable old housekeeper, who is such a grand lady. But I'll just give you a sketch of yesterday's proceedings, or you'll say "Bother the little minx, why don't she get on with her twaddle," which, however, would be very vulgar, if you did.

Well then: March 14.—Late breakfast; roamed about these beautiful grounds for an hour before Miss Fortescue appeared. But Miss Tylney, I think, had been up a long time. About eleven

P.M., says Miss Fortescue to your excellent little sister, "Shall we take a walk, Lilybell? I want to call upon a poor woman. You don't mind seeing sick folk, do you?" I answered heartily enough that I should like such an expedition with her, of all things; that I visited some poor people regularly when I was at home, &c. "Is it Mrs. Shalford?" enquired Miss Tylney. "Yes," was the answer. "Since you were last there, she has been much worse, and now I am afraid she is dying."

Now, Freddy, good night.

March 16.—So, soon after, we sallied forth. The cottage was pleasantly situated at the edge of a common. Three children were just coming home from school, and their father, who worked for a wheelwright close by, came from the yard when he saw us approaching.

"Good morning, Robert," said Miss Fortescue, in a kindly voice, which I thought it did the man good to hear. "Is your wife a little easier to-day?"

The poor man only shook his head, and, drawing his coat sleeve across his eyes, would not trust himself to speak, but stood holding open the garden gate respectfully for us to pass through. We went upstairs, and found the sufferer in bed, very weak, but grateful, she said, "for all her mercies, and not least for the comfort this dear young lady has been to me and the poor children." Ellen read to her, as usual, a chapter or two from the old Book, which you know, Freddy, for all you say, has been comforting some besides her for many hundred years; and then Ellen knelt down and offered up a prayer, which the dying woman said seemed to carry her in the spirit right up to the very throne of God. I thought so too, and that it seemed to leave one kneeling there in grateful, adoring love, and indeed it filled one with such a blessed sense of divine forgiveness and protecting mercy, that when we rose and looked on her wan, yet flushed face and brilliant eyes, I didn't wonder—something of the glory of Heaven seemed reflected there. But you'll call me an enthusiast or visionary, or something of that sort. Never mind, dear, I don't care a button about anything *you* call me, provided, as Billy, the garden boy, once remarked, "You don't call me too late for dinner!"

"Ah, there is Jessy," said Miss Fortescue soon after, as she put out her hand to a very pretty, sweet-looking child about twelve years of age. "I was afraid you were not with us."

"She's been across the common," feebly explained Mrs. Shalford, "to get me a little book I fancied I should like to see again, as a neighbour once lent me. Jessy would go anywhere, day or night,

for mother," she added, looking in the girl's face with a faint smile, and drawing her affectionately towards her. Poor Jessy's heart, I think, was very full, but our presence helped her to command herself, and her face brightened up when Ellen observed, "Well, she seems to be a famous little housekeeper. Both cottage and children all look so nice and clean and tidy."

"Ah, ma'am," whispered her mother, at the same time making a sign to the children to leave the room. "But what will become of her when I'm gone? It's a hard thing for a poor lamb like her to be left so young. Eh, sure, Miss," turning to Ellen, "you may think you know what it is, but 'deed and it's a sore different thing for a poor girl or a rich one to lose their mother. Yet it's a crying matter I know both for one and t'other;" and the tears would come.

"Dear Mrs. Shalford!" said Ellen, softly, "Jessy shall not want a friend while I can be one to her. By-and-bye I daresay we can take her into service at Neville Court."

"God in heaven bless you, Miss! You see the little ones won't miss me like as this un'll do, and father may chance marry again by-and-bye. There's no saying. Many on 'em do. For all we've been true and loving man and wife fifteen year, maybe he'll get one as 'ull take care of the little ones. But second mothers don't suit so well like with the elder—ah! well-a-day (trying to keep down a sob) if it had pleased God to spare me a little longer—but there, there—may He help me to say His blessed will be done!" Then I can't remember what came next, and I daresay you don't care; but I recollect that, as we left the cottage, we met a fine hearty-looking lad about fourteen, full of health and bashfulness, whom Jessy welcomed with a kiss, and said, with a bewitching little sisterly pride,—

"He's been all the way to Horsham, please you, Miss, for farmer B—and slept there last night. Arn't you tired, Bobby-boy—come in. Your dinner's a-waiting." Bobby received an encouraging shake of the hand from Ellen, and a sixpence to get a little book to read from to mother. As we walked away, I asked if he were Jessy's brother. "Oh no," she answered, "the lad is Mrs. Shalford's nephew, and they took him to live with them, good souls as they were, when his mother died, and the father went off with a party of haymakers, four years ago."

What a deal of true generosity and self-sacrifice there is, Alfred, among the poor—that is, the sober, honest poor. Well, we went on. Two or three other calls were made and some tracts exchanged.

But where are we coming to now? thought I, as we neared a

dirty cottage, and I said, rather thoughtlessly, "What a horrid piece of business this looks like."

Ellen shook her head sorrowfully, and said, "I didn't mean to have brought you here, but I believe we had better call," so she knocked at the half-open door.

"Oh, don't come here, Miss," exclaimed a woman's shrill voice, "this is no place for the likes of you, and that drunken brute a-lying there, curse him, and never a bit has he brought home for three weeks, and the childer half-starved and I a-working like a slave!"

Somebody, who I suppose was the woman's husband, looked up at us from the chair on which he sat huddled together, like a sack of potatoes, with an expression, half-maudlin, half-fierce, and I almost wished we hadn't come. Five or six poor little dirty things clustered about us, timidly touching our gowns, and looking wistfully up in our faces.

"George," said Miss Fortescue (hushing the woman's tongue with a silent appeal) "you've broken your promise."

"Aye; I've been and done it," was the growling answer.

"But you mustn't use me like that, George. It's very unkind. I'm not going to let you drop down to a drunkard's grave. You are to become a sober, happy man."

"Devil a bit. What's the odds?"

"Why, a great deal. It makes a great difference to all who care for you."

"*She* doan't care for me—jaw—jaw—jawing away from morning to night. Not a bit of peace wi' her."

"And who makes her jaw?" said Nelly, with such firmness. "Shouldn't you scold if you had a wife who went on as you do? Come, come, George, give up the drink—don't we all care for you?"

"I b'lieve you does. I'll see about it, my lady. Just get this old 'ooman to mend her temper, and I'll be hanged if I doan't mend my ways."

Gradually the soothing influence of Ellen's words and manner, I suppose, had an effect upon the whole household. We helped the poor woman "to set things to rights," made the most of what there was in the cupboard, and put a saucepan on the fire to make a meal for the whimpering children, with the help of Ellen's basket, and in the meantime stopped their pitiful cries of "Mammy, a bit o' bread"—by a few little biscuits. The man straightened himself up, stumbled into a dark corner for a spade, and muttering something about, "No good going to brickyard to-day," walked with an unsteady gait into a bit of potato ground, and began digging.

"Ah!" said his wife, wiping her eyes, and curtsying as we left the cottage, "if I could only talk him over as you does, miss!"

"Be kind to him, Polly. It's no use scolding," said Ellen—"You'll help most by loving and praying. Be patient, and with God's help you may yet see him a good husband again."

"The Lord in Heaven grant it—for I'm nigh spent. But bless you, dear soul, God in His goodness bless you, my lady, for all you've done."

Well, that was very nice of her; but do you know, Freddy, all this made me feel so wild and wicked I wanted to begin whooping like a Cherokee Indian, and dancing a war-dance! Why *is* there so much wickedness and misery in the world? One can't be peaceful and good while others are so bad. But, oh dear! I'm sure I'm as bad as any of them, at least in my heart. But this won't do.

As we wound our way towards Neville Court through a copse of bright green larch, and down primrose-banked lanes where the sunlight came glinting between stems and boughs, on to bright grassy nooks and corners, I ventured to ask Miss Fortescue who taught her how to deal so well with such cases as these.

"Next to the Great Teacher," she answered, "it was Harry, boy Harry. He has such a kind, frank, fearless way with him. I saw that these folks would let him say anything to them, and so I determined to take a hint."

Oh, I was so glad I had asked—for I know you like to hear anything in Mr. Fortescue's praise. But I thought to myself, would not our rector have said that she should have tried to awaken the man's fear or love of God, and she only spoke of his having treated *her* badly. So I managed to get this out also in my elegant way, as you viciously call it. But I find I may talk to her almost as frankly as I can with you, Fred. She answered—

"Well, Harry had been with me once to some of these places, and when we were coming home he said, 'I don't fancy you can do such a fellow as that (meaning William Stokes, who was quite as bad as that brickmaker) much good by talking religion to him. You must first make him feel a little gratitude and confidence towards yourself, I think. You are a great deal more real to him than God is, or will be for many a day.' I confess I was a wee bit shocked, but in thinking it over, Lily, I thought he was right—I have since felt quite sure that he was."

I answered that I believed so too. The higher love, I suppose, will follow. Do you know, Alfred, I think your friend Mr. Fortescue will be a very useful man some day.

In the evening I heard Miss Fortescue and Miss Tylney dis-

cussing your friend Mr. Arlington. Ellen was just a little laughing and replying to her friend—"Perhaps, yes—I mean, love, that his powers always seemed to me so disproportionate to his—aims."

"In fact you thought there was a *want* of power—eh?"

Ellen, I thought, evidently did hold that heretical opinion.

Then I heard Miss Tylney say, with a bit of a sigh, "Perhaps it is so. But this I *can* say, that I doubt if a more thoroughly unselfish, self-sacrificing nature ever breathed" (pause).

Now, there's a lot of important information for your instruction, warning, and guidance, my dear. And now, my provoking, unsatisfactory, yet too much-beloved fraternal relation, once more, good night.

[Leila's journal continued next day with an account of how Miss Fortescue had been attributing all her *efforts* to help the poor to Miss Tylney, and what little *power* she had of dealing with them, humanly speaking,] to that fine brother of hers, who must be a first-rate hero, Freddy, I'm quite sure, and I strongly advise you to cultivate him. You want a little more of the heroic in you, you know, Fred, if you'll confess it.

Then came the long, delicious twilight, and the soft, sweet tones of the piano, as Miss Tylney played bits from Beethoven, or improvised; and Ellen's trilling notes occasionally rose on the evening air till candles appeared, and then one of them read from the "Gerusalemme Liberata," while the other and myself worked, till the servants and head gardener, who live in the house, came in to prayers. Then we all retired, and the hush of night came down

"On hall and bower and moon-lit tower,"

and I leaned out of my bed-room window and thought I was surely in Paradise. Oh, Freddy, may I confess to you what an exquisite contrast the life here presents to that at home. Here, all is so peaceful—there, all seems so unrestful; here, all is kindness and love—there, ah! so often we are jarring on each other's feelings, crossing each other's purposes, striving after something or other, or scolding somebody or other. I don't mean that *you*, brother mine, are ever unkind to *me*; but I know I'm often naughty, and I often feel irritable and cross, and lose my temper. There seems to be so little to soothe, and heal, and to lift one's thoughts above the weary, jangling world. Even religion seems harsh and hard at Wimbledon. But sic, I mustn't talk so, even to you. I sadly want, in reality, to be home again to tease you, and to worry Adelaide, and defy papa! Oh, dear, what a terribly long, foolish

scrawl of a journal I've been writing for you. Won't you scold? Well, but it is not much crossed. Good-bye, darling Fred, and ever love your own little

LILYBELL.

CHAPTER X.

GOWN! Gown! Town and Gown Row! Hurrah for a shindy!" exclaimed half-a-hundred athletic young gownsmen, as they rushed one night from their various colleges up the King's Parade, in Cambridge, along which there rolled a hoarse, confused murmur of tumult and struggling wrath, swelling to a much fiercer roar as you approached the scene of conflict. By the light of the gas-lamp at the corner of St. Mary's Passage, might be seen a huge crowd swaying hither and thither, while furious blows were being freely interchanged in all directions. Sometimes the tide of battle seemed to be victoriously carried up the wide alley, which at that point comes at a right angle into the street, and louder shouts of "Town for ever!" proclaimed the temporary defeat of the gownsmen. Great hulking fellows from the Cam side were laying about them lustily; and many a youth who had stood his ground with iron resolution in the pugilistic ring at Eton, Harrow, or Rugby, found it was a different thing to stand face to face with the savage "bargees" of Cambridge when their blood was up. The undergraduates were giving ground fast when they heard a lusty cheer from somewhat finer-toned throats than had been dinning in their ears for the last quarter of an hour: a reinforcement of collegians appeared, charging down upon the infuriated democracy, and came hurtling on through the dense mass with irresistible force.

"Hurrah! Here's Fortescue and his lot," exclaimed a handsome undergraduate, with one eye closed, and who, though evidently getting blown, was still standing up manfully to the fray, our friend Alfred Featherstone to wit.

"Is he? by ——!" shouted a jolly old bargeman, "then he's too late to help you, my hearty," and down went our handsome friend at last on a door-step; while Fortescue and the rest of his party, having got through to their friends, now turned and began charging back again down the alley. Fortescue's height and length of arm gave him a comfortable superiority in such a *mêlée*; and his

intense enjoyment of the whole thing kept his tongue going with divers jests, illustrative of his good humour rather than his wit. Whether he took or gave a blow, there was always a joke, and brawny fellows, with grimy faces, staggered back or went down (when there was room) before his huge fist, hardly knowing whether he hadn't hit them by mistake.

"Come on, Featherstone!" cried Fortescue, as he worked his way down the alley from the place where he first saw his friend surrounded by bargemen; but Featherstone was past hearing. "Come along, old chap! Here are four-and-twenty blackbirds—(thump, thump)—and we'll bake them in a pie—(thump, thump, thump). Hark! how the darlings—(thump and slight recoil, and a blow on his own skull that made his teeth chatter)—now the pie is opened—(thump, thump)—cracky! how they sing! Come on, Freddy, boy!—the little dog laughed—Freddy!—to see such sport! Go it, ye cripples!"

But the bargemen's party were getting tired of the fun. This new reinforcement of gownsmen, coming fresh to the encounter, was too much even for their pluck, and as the Cantabs behind rallied up, shouting wildly, "Down with the bargees! Down with the snobs! Gown for ever!" pressing vigorously upon their amphibious opponents, the latter "executed a strategic movement," and retreated sullenly, though unpursued.

Oh, the joy and madness of battle! The mighty gladness of strong, brave animal nature, feeling its power, exulting in its strength and endurance of pain—Animal? Yes; but something higher too. Self-forgetfulness, contempt of pain—not so much the pleasure of mauling your opponent as of facing danger, defying it, conquering that which would tread you down and debase you by oppression.

Yet sorry work after all. Not very gentlemanly, nor exactly conformable with Christian morality. Bloody, brutal work at the best. What was it all for? Nobody could tell. How did it begin? Nobody knew. Ah! this fighting wants a very good cause to white-wash it. Too often the uppermost feeling becomes one of savage hatred to your opponent, and a maddening thirst to crush him out of existence. Fortescue escaped this diabolic stage of the complaint by the genial good humour with which he took as well as gave all that the fortune of war could inflict upon him. But it was treading on the edge of a precipice.

"Where's Featherstone?" quoth Harry, as he sat down on the pavement and leaned against a house front.

"Carried home, as you'll have to be, old boy. Look here

Brazeby," said the speaker to another Caius man. "My! what a cut! We must get the darling to the doctor's."

"Aye," returned the other, "he's a bit faint, I think. Featherstone's taken home as still as the shutter he lay upon."

"The deuce he is!" exclaimed Fortescue, springing up, but soon sinking down again: "I must go and see after him, then!"

"Nonsense! Featherstone's got plenty to see after him," cried Brazeby, in a tone of immense vexation, as Fortescue tried to shake off his friends, for they saw how pale he looked. "And here, I swear, come the proctors and bull-dogs again! We *must* lift you!"

"Go to the devil!" ejaculated Fortescue, as he wrenched himself away from them, and, clapping a handkerchief to his bleeding wound, set off at a round trot by a back way to Emmanuel, which was Featherstone's College. The others took to their heels.

"In for it again!" quoth that fast young gentleman, as Harry cautiously approached his bedside, "but not quite dead yet. But it's all my own fault. I began the row. No matter. Never say die. Hold up your tail, my doggy, and at 'em again."

"You're the boy for backing! old Freddy," responded Harry, in a soothing voice, as the watcher sent by the doctor made indignant demonstrations to him from behind the curtain, expressive of the necessity of his either quieting Alfred or taking himself out of the room. But Harry could tranquillize a patient like Alfred (and soon did) better than fifty watchers or doctors to boot. Finding the surgeon was expected to look in again about nine, he determined to wait till he came, and sat down by the fire holding his aching head in the easiest position discoverable.

The time went heavily on. Harry was in no mood for reading, nor were the books in Alfred's library much to his liking. The prints on the walls, moreover, were better suited to a low casino, than to the taste of a man brought up by a father like Harry's. At length he remembered a letter was in his pocket which he had received that morning from Gerry Arlington, but which a boating expedition had prevented his reading with much care. He pulled it out and meditated on its contents. If anybody likes to read it also, there is no particular objection to their doing so, though it may be a waste of time.

[GERALD'S LETTER.]

"Hartland House, 1833.

"Well, my boy, how's the world wagging with you? Judging by your epistolary statements, I opine that you are in the sixth heavens, and it's an abominable shame if you don't think so. Oh! my dear

Harry, what wouldn't I give to be in your shoes! The glimpse you give of University life is enough to drive one mad, were there not something higher and better still than having all things just as you wish them to be. I can't imagine more perfect happiness in this world of imperfections, for a time at least, than such a life as yours. The only question is—what's to come of it all? Can anything worth having come out of such an extremely jolly way of passing one's days? You'll think I'm doing the good boy with a vengeance, but I've had my eyes opened a bit this winter. And you helped me. The shop won't do by itself. There's a terrible deal of gammon in it. I remembered all you said about working out of office hours, and I'm going at my work, as my father used to make me put my pony at the leaping-bar—when he saw me in a horrible stew at the prospect! There's no good fiddle-faddling about it. I shall sink into a mere slave of business in office hours (or perhaps a vile 'hog of the Epicurean sty' out of them) if I don't work like a trump at Greek and History in the night watches; but it's no joke, Harry, giving up all society just as you begin to understand its charms. I'm glad I went to a few parties, because now I know what I'm giving up. But I shouldn't mind that a button if I could only have two or three of the *best* hours of the day for Hallam and Demosthenes, *et quibusdam aliis*. But oh, Harry, it's hard climbing a mountain with four or five stone on your back—hard to feel your mind all sharp and clear of a morning when you have to bother about office work, and all muddy and fagged at night when you sit down to *the* work which alone can enable you to play well your part in the great solemn drama of England's destinies. And then my *physique* gives symptoms of objecting to this mode of proceeding. No matter. What man has done, man may do. I *will* work on and conquer. '*I will!*' What glorious words. Is not this a fine sentence I met with lately? 'Distinguish with exactness in thyself and others between wishes and will in the strictest sense. Who has many wishes has generally but little will. Who has energy of will has few diverging wishes. Whose will is bent with energy on *one* must renounce the wishes for *many* things. Who cannot do this is not stamped with the majesty of human nature. The energy of choice, the unison of various powers, for one, is alone WILL, born under the agonies of self-denial and renounced desires.'*

"Heaven knows that's a doctrine I want preached to me. If ever there was a wretch cursed with 'many diverging wishes,' I know where to find him. But I've bored you enough with my

* Lavater's "Aphorisms."

troubles. I guess you had to crunch up one or two of that genus (I mean impertinent wishes) when Featherstone came to town to their ball in Portland Place. Didn't I honour your abstinence. But it was an exquisitely delightful party, and—shall I torment you?—Adelaide Featherstone looked magnificent. I don't quite know what to make of her sister. She's dreadfully tantalizing. There was a noble-looking girl there, of the name of Shirley, and I had some very interesting talk with her. Ned Grant's sisters are nice girls. Fanny Rivers, too, was there. She is a sweet little thing, and dances beautifully. And then her smile, when she thanks you! but I must think you as great a fool as myself to run on in this style. However, I've given it all up, so try and respect me still. I've been reading some more essays of Carlyle's, as I walk to and from London. They are so splendid—one on Burns, in particular, and another on the 'Signs of the Times.' Best of all, perhaps, one called 'Characteristics.' You must read them—and especially some things by a Dr. Channing, of America. It is such noble writing! There are three essays I would specially recommend, on Napoleon, Milton, and Fenelon. Now it seems to me he has more of the true spirit of religion than any author I ever read. But perhaps you would think him a sad heretic. I'm very glad you get such treats on Sundays at St. Mary's. I go as usual to the old chapel, whereof I know you have a most irreverent recollection, and, as usual, I wish it contained a few more worshippers. But mind, I had rather go there than to the parish church or a cathedral, with such a parson as they've generally got—though it be crowded. 'So much the worse for you,' I fancy you saying with a Mephistopheles sneer, whereupon I meekly shut up, beg you to remember all church parsons are not like one you early learned to honour, and subscribe myself with a sigh that gradually changes into an imprecation on myself for a fool, and a benediction on you for your ignorant attachment to such an egotistic lubber as

" Your tolerably sincere friend,

" GERRY ARLINGTON."

Harry sat and mused. The letter gave him pain, so did his wound. Certainly he wasn't quite in the sixth heavens now, but his thoughts were considerably the more painful of the two. Here was he, with all the immense privileges in his grasp for which poor Arlington was sighing in vain, and what was he doing with them? How was he preparing himself for the great work of life?

The doctor came, gave Alfred some physic, bound up Fortescue's head, and seeing he was also very pale and faint, gave him his arm

as far as the gate of Caius, meaning to depart before he could be seen. But the porter opened suddenly, and seeing Fortescue in such company, having heard of the row, and knowing his character, scanned him suspiciously, preparatory to giving evidence next day. Sick and sorry our hero stumbled up-stairs into his dark and cheerless room, struck a light, and sank into an arm-chair, got a glass of brandy-and-water and tried a cigar, but that only made matters worse. Then he tried to rally his spirits, informed himself distinctly that he was a fool, that this sort of nonsense wouldn't do, that he had had a jolly good lark, and mustn't now be "singing small." But to no purpose. The vision of his poor friend toiling on dismally by day, and painfully by night, fretting his nerves to fiddle-strings, and doing it all that he might be faithful to noble resolves, whereunto he, Fortescue, was as solemnly pledged as his correspondent, but which he now knew in his heart he was miserably failing to keep—this image of the friend he loved with all the strength of his nature haunted him like a ghost, and through the night kept rousing him from brief feverish slumbers. If at last he rose and knelt in the dim light which a waning moon cast upon the floor of his room and asked for forgiveness and help whence alone they could be granted, if he then and there solemnly resolved once again to take to reading and self-denial, and then went to bed again and slept, in spite of his gyp, the sleep of the just till the sun had been up five hours—if all this did take place, it is no business of ours—and so we had better bow and pass on.

CHAPTER XI.

FEATHERSTONE soon recovered, and some beneficial effect seemed to have been wrought upon him during the hours in which Harry buttered his toast, and read Carlyle to him according to Arlington's advice. But the repentance and good resolutions of both young gentlemen seemed probably coming too late. Searching investigations were being conducted into the late affray, and condign punishment threatened. Both Featherstone and Fortescue had been before the authorities one morning, and were sitting in decidedly very low spirits, smoking, in front of the empty grate in the rooms of the latter, while waiting to hear their sentence, which

they anticipated would, perhaps, be expulsion—at the best, rustication.

(Knock at the door; notes delivered by self-contained Gyp. Open and read. Both to the same effect.)

“Severe reprimand; but first offence. Punished already to some extent by contusions. Not to be expelled—not even rusticated—this time. Trust this may be a warning. No second forgiveness.”

“Thank God!” said Harry, and drew a long breath.

“Jolly companions, every one,” sung out Alfred; “now let’s have out the brandy—and then!—a constitutional.”

* * * * *

It is a warm, sunny day in June. The birch and mountain ash gently wave their graceful sprays in the summer air over many a fair garden. The young birds hop blithely amid the leafy screen of various elm and beech trees in old parks and forest glades. The sunlight sleeps calmly on the turf, the heather, and the gorse of Southern downs, and sheep are nibbling on those breezy hills far away. Sparkling trout streams run dancing along their pebbly beds on lonely Yorkshire moors, or in leafy Devonshire by Luscleigh Cleeve or wild, glorious Dartmoor, where a sense of infinite peace and serenity steals into the soul of some solitary fly-fisher, as with a volume of Wordsworth or Isaak Walton in his pocket he wanders on the live-long day. In a shady nook of Trinity Gardens sits on a bench a tall young gownsman of Caius, reading thoughtfully, known to us as Harry Fortescue; and a reading man of that college tells a quiet don, with whom he is taking a meditative stroll, that a great improvement had come to pass in that quarter since the last Town and Gown row.

Yes, a sweet and blessed day in fair gardens and college grounds, and also, no doubt, on breezy downs looking away to the blue sea—a very heavenly day for all whose minds and hearts were then in tranquil harmony with its calm and loving splendours. A young gentleman, not altogether in that condition, is walking hastily down Lime Street (on the shady side when he can), accompanied by a broad-shouldered, sea-faring man, who, to judge by his appearance and conversation, did not think too meanly of himself or his office as Captain of the *Indian Queen*. Across Fenchurch Street, between carts and waggons; down Mark Lane, amid groups of excited corn-factors and farmers; into Tower Street, amid waggons and porters; down Water Lane, amid clerks, errand boys, and porters again; then debouching upon Thames Street, amid fish-fags, tide-waiters, labourers, carmen, clerks, errand boys, waggons, and porters again—Mr. Grant’s clerk, with his thoughts far away in Elysium, and

his nautical companion nursing his self-importance, kept their persevering and rapid way. They enter the Custom House, mount to the first floor, pass into the magnificent "Long Room." The clerk is recalled by the sight to a sense of actual existence. Down he drops from a world of imaginary poetical scenes and historical visions—down from thoughts in which Wallenstein, Thekla, Manfred, and the Bride of Abydos, in addition to sundry creations of his own peculiar and fantastic dreams, were playing their heroic or loving parts—down he plunges like Phaethon into scarcely less confusion than that hapless charioteer. The *Indian Queen* has just arrived from Miramichi, with a cargo of yellow pine, and requires "reporting." The taciturn and conceited master duly takes the sacred volume in his rough paw to make oath that he is not attempting to defraud His Majesty of England by any illicit proceedings in the smuggling line, and perhaps from a dislike to the very greasy cover of the said volume, perhaps by an accidental mistake, kisses his dirty thumb instead of the book. His conscience is, at all events, thereby relieved, and he turns cheerfully to survey the scene. The Custom House official takes but little notice of the kissing process, and is soon absorbed in perusing the papers respectfully presented by the ship-broker's clerk. Said clerk watches him rather nervously. His mind has not been so diligently fixed on the preparation of the papers in question as to make him feel quite secure at that moment concerning their reception. Other clerks, with captains in tow, come up. Above the broken hum of voices is soon heard, in sharp, querulous tones, the Custom House dignitary calling, "Grant's clerk! Here, sir, what do you mean by bringing your manifest in that state? It's not the first time, nor the second; and why haven't you brought all his papers, sir? Here, take your manifest back, and get it properly filled in!" All the captains and clerks in the neighbourhood looked scornfully or compassionately at poor Gerry, who, in no slight confusion, took the rejected papers, and made way for more fortunate applicants. The captain of the *Indian Queen* drew himself up in silent indignation (with a half-repressed oath), while his great red face grew redder than ever under a sense of his humiliating position. For these hardy sons of the sea are as bashful as children under the gaze of a few landsmen, though they pretend to despise them nevertheless. The comparative solitude of the greater part of their lives, and their absolute supremacy while afloat, makes them curiously sensitive to the pressure of public opinion when ashore. It was some relief to him to see the young chap with whom he had come to this detestable Custom House, himself covered with con-

fusion; and, while full of resentment at the injurious treatment he was receiving, the Captain began to reflect on the brokerage he should have to pay for this futile attempt to "report" him; hence he gave quite as surly an answer as might be expected, when Gerald, after looking in vain for his mistake, appealed to the Captain for assistance. With desperate energy Gerald turned again to the irritated official, saying—

"I can't see what's wrong, sir."

"What business has Mr. Grant to send a clerk, I should like to know, who can't do his work?" exclaimed that gentleman. "Go back and ask him to send us somebody who knows his business. You're making a fool of this man, dancing him down here to no purpose in this way."

"D——d shame," growled the captain in savage disgust. Then came a silence of moments which seemed hours to Gerald. Through the great windows of the Long Room, so thickly plastered with soot and dust, that they scarcely required blinds, struggled the early summer sunshine. In the College Corridors, Gower Street,—in Trinity College Gardens, Cambridge,—by Dartmoor trout streams, on breezy Sussex downs there was peace and freedom. Why not here? Gerald looked round despairingly, with a sensation of intense suffering. What was life worth? What was *he* worth? He and his life both seemed a wretched mistake. His father and Mr. Grant, what would they think of all this sort of thing? Recollections of the London University, of splendid lectures, hard study, of animated debates, of high resolves, and heroic purposes—of both Houses of Parliament, of Fox, Chatham, and Harry Fortescue—came tumbling up, much as they do when one is drowning. How was *he* climbing the Eternal Hills? A curious heap of mingled exaggerations, and distortions, and truths, but all intensely *real*. Somebody touched his arm. A good-natured clerk, belonging to a rival establishment, who had witnessed Gerald's confusion, having completed his own business, came up to him and said, "Let's look at it." Then a few seconds served to detect the omissions. "You haven't been down to the letter office, to make your post-office declaration, you see; and you have left out—"

"Oh, I'm extremely obliged to you," answered Gerry, gushingly.—"Thank you, I see, I see."

A few minutes set everything straight. The sacred mysteries of "reporting" were duly transacted. Mr. Grant's client and his clerk sailed hastily forth from the Custom House back to port in Lime Street; Captain giving himself great airs meanwhile. It is true Gerald had reported dozens of ships successfully, but one

failure in twenty wouldn't do. Captain had an interview with Mr. Grant before the latter went on 'Change, and Mr. Grant had interview with Mr. Arlington next morning, when his letters had been read, and his first round of calls had been completed.

"You see, Mr. Arlington, I shall lose my clients at this rate. These fellows are abominably proud and fanciful, many of them. Some are thoroughly good-natured, others are regular gentlemen; but others, again, are glad of an excuse for showing the rough side of their tongue, and then they talk these things over at their 'houses of call,' you see."

"Yes, it won't do," replied Mr. Arlington thoughtfully; "I must have some serious talk with him. I don't think he has been well lately. But if you would excuse him for three or four days, he could have a run in the country and come back fresh for his work."

"By all means; certainly. Any more ships, Sir, for the Baltic, or the Bombay Coast, wanted at present? I have two ready to charter—one copper bottomed—600 tons—just the thing for teak."

"No, not yet, thank you. The timber trade is in a very miserable state, thanks to that Tory majority that keep up the timber duties," replied Mr. Arlington, with a very wrathful smile.

"Hemp or tallow?" suggested Mr. Grant.

"Ah, that's what our friend Lee" (his managing clerk) "is always driving at. We'll see, Mr. Grant. Good morning."

As the shipbroker departed, Mr. Arlington turned to contemplate the fire with something very like a heavy sigh. He knew that the only thing to retrieve certain severe losses incurred years ago through too much kindness to relations was to make a good hit in the latter of the articles alluded to by Mr. Grant. He saw with prescient eye a fine opportunity coming, but he knew he had not now got the requisite capital. He had done exceedingly well "in corn" for two years running, but that was over now, thanks to a fine season. His credit was still good. The Reform Bill had been carried, and revolution at all events postponed. Lee was of a very sanguine temper, and having everything to hope and nothing to fear from bold speculations, kept urging his employer to enterprising proceedings. Mr. Arlington was much engrossed with the London and Birmingham Railway affairs, and the London Docks, and the Atlantic Steam Navigation Company, and became necessarily more dependent upon the said managing clerk, who hated the dull slow timber business which, as his employer truly remarked, "was being cut up more and more every year, and would scarcely get a living for a parish pauper." "But," continued Mr. Arlington to himself, "Featherstone's doing exceedingly well in

tallow. Why not persuade him to do a little more in it on joint account?" At all events, he would talk it over with him confidentially, and show him the prospect. Considerably relieved by this idea, he ordered his horse round, but sent a note to Mr. Grant before leaving town to say he should like him to talk to Gerald and see the effect before speaking himself—the stern, loving heart shrunk from the task.

On the following morning, when Gerald entered his box at the counting-house, a letter with the Cambridge post-mark lay upon his desk, and very gladly he paid up the requisite eightpence. Gladly, and yet how sorrowfully, for the contrast between what he was doing and what he wanted to be doing was daily becoming more oppressive. The letter contained a pressing invitation from Fortescue to come and see him for a week at Caius College, and have "no end of chatter, walks, rowing, and 'Trinity audit!' The men would be leaving in scores now, and he should have no difficulty in getting him a bed-room in the College." It gave a vivid picture of the writer's energetic application to study, and concluded with an emphatic appeal to his friend to come and confirm him in his good resolutions. He meant to stay up and read for more than half the Long Vacation, but "must have a little lark in a mild way with his old friend first for a week or two, just to wind him up again," while he was quite sure Gerald was worrying himself to death in "that beastly Lime Street," and had better escape before the grave closed over him.

Just as the shipbroker's clerk was shaking his head dismally over this epistle he was summoned to his master's room. "You'll catch it, I'm afraid," whispered Mr. Bramble drily, as he brought the message, not without a certain sour satisfaction, for the poor man, as before observed, had often been disgusted as well as inconvenienced by Arlington's mistakes. The worthy Bramble was not mistaken. Mr. Grant spoke rather severely at first, and dwelt on the moral aspects of the case till Gerald was extremely uncomfortable, but was disarmed by his clerk's evident repentance and distress, and finished by offering him a week's leave of absence. "It is rather sooner than I meant, but you don't look well. Perhaps you had better take a fortnight. I will arrange with Macdonald to do your work, and you must do the same for him by-and-bye."

Mr. Arlington would certainly rather have had his son go in any earthly direction than Cambridge, but could not find it in his heart to obstruct. So on the following day Harry's eccentric but gifted friend was spinning along the Woodford and Epping Road on the box of that exceedingly neat vehicle which forty years ago took

Cambridge gownsmen to their *Alma Mater* on that line of road. He sat absorbed in the perusal of an alarmingly fascinating book, the reading of which some weak-minded but fast young gentlemen had averred in Gerald's hearing to constitute "an era, sir, in one's life," viz., "Vivian Grey." Oh! the joy of that ride! something never to be forgotten. London, and its strifes and toils, its horrid problems and throttling burdens, left behind, as utterly as if they were sunk in the fathomless past for ever. Bright sunshine, balmy airs around him, a cheerful coachman, natty-going nags, doing their work with a will, picturesque country, an intensely interesting autobiography of a youth as romantic and ambitious and absurd, though by no means so generous as himself—above all, Harry and Cambridge, in the distance, approaching every hour. Well, youth is buoyant and very hopeful! Thank God for youth. Then the hearty affectionate greeting and cozy dinner, and the walk in Trinity Gardens in the cool summer evening, and all the dreamy fascinations of the grand old University seen by Gerald for the first time. It was like a vision of the "Arabian Nights" in the midst of prosy, practical Old England. But the "forms of young imaginations" are not local or national, and there is no poetry or romance equal to that which comes out of keen practical life, brought into contact with the wild daring of imagination and youth.

After much exalted talk concerning Earl Grey and the Reform Bill, Coleridge, Shakespeare, Kant, Goëthe, Schiller, and Carlyle, the two friends subsided in due course to a lower level, in the course of which Harry inquired after old acquaintances.

"What about the little coxswain, for instance? Isn't he, at least, a gladness and delight to you, Gerry? Try this cigar—oh! what? you haven't yet learnt to appreciate the fragrant weed? Well, I believe you are right. Half the men here, I am certain, damage themselves desperately with it. But it's a wonderful comfort, after all. But, about Ned the Knowing. Leadenhall Street can hardly be the desert you represent it, with that gay partner in your toils?"

"To laugh with, or at, did you mean? Oh, he's excessively comical and extremely obliging, and dreadfully conceited, and if I weren't so deucedly seedy there, it would often be capital fun. It's the finest thing in the world to hear him talk about the parties and picnics he goes to, and the splendid girls he's been dancing with."

"O Lord!" ejaculated Harry. "But the medicals—do you ever see them? There was some good stuff there, I fancied."

"What! Pierce and Hackett? Yes, I've met them two or three times at Grant's. Grunting Bob I beheld one night last winter at

the Haymarket, dissolved in tears—not at the ‘Gamester’—(oh! what a splendid actress Fanny Kemble is! I saw her *début*. No, not at her)—but at the farce which followed it. What a sarcastic beggar the fellow is. On the other hand, what about our Alfred, Harry?”

“Well, he’s a jolly good fellow—rather too fast,” replied Fortescue. “Gone down, now, you know.”

“I believe,” began Gerald with effort, but continuing *crescendo*, thinking the time had come for confiding his own love affairs to Harry’s sympathy, “that little sister of his, Miss Lily, will be the saving of him, if anything can be.”

“Leila! Pooh! I don’t think much of her.”

Gerry, taken by surprise, answered nervously and with questionable veracity, “Oh, no, no more do I; but still there’s something——” he could *not* get any further, the effort half-choked him, then he felt sore and subsided.

But Harry rattled on in romantic rhodomontade about the elder sister, and his friend had time to recover.

Once or twice they put on the gloves, just for the sake of “Auld Lang Syne,” as Harry said, but both felt they had got rather beyond that now. “Yet it’s good exercise,” quoth Gerry, condescendingly, as he wiped his damp brows.

“You gave me a stunner once,” cried his friend, throwing the gloves in a corner. “D’ye know, you’re the only fellow that’s too quick for me, Gerry, in a mill. If it wasn’t for that, and your tremendous big shoulders——”

“You’d pretty soon knock me on to the North Pole,” replied Arlington, with pardonable slight self-complacency, as he admiringly surveyed his friend’s Herculean proportions.

One or two more talks during this delightful visit must be chronicled, and then we have done with fascinating Cambridge for the present.

“We’ve had a splendid talk this morning, Gerry,” said Harry, during a tramp along the Trumpington Road one rainy day. “Do you know you always do me a deal of good when we get on the moralities? My poor dad would give you his blessing; he was a Christian soul—few like him.”

“I thank God for that, my doctor; and don’t fancy the benefit’s all on one side. I want you as much to keep *me* straight.”

“The best return, I believe, I could make you, Gerry, would be to help you out of those queer Dissenting notions of yours. If you could but know and love the grand old Church of England and its liturgy as I do.”

"Yet you shrink from the thought of being a clergyman?"

"Oh," replied Harry, sadly, "that's because of subscription to the Articles. My father's mind was racked with doubts. I've known him suffer such agony as you can't conceive from the horrid fears and scruples as to whether he ought not to leave the Church, and whether he ought to encourage his darling wish of seeing me a clergyman. Sometimes, when he has thought me asleep, I've heard him praying and sobbing in his great misery. It was enough to——" (Pause.)

"But if these Thirty-nine Articles are such shocking things, Harry, as I believe they are——"

"No, no, it's not exactly that," interrupted Harry, hastily. "It's not so much that he objected to them, at least not to many of them, but what he complained of was having to sign them all, and declare 'his unfeigned assent and consent' to everything in the Prayer Book, and having to read the Burial Service and that horrid Athanasian Creed, and having no power to leave out an ounce of anything,—and he said all this mischief came from the Act of Uniformity and black 'St. Bartholomew' in 1662."

"What was that?"

"Oh, don't you know all about the two thousand clergymen ejected from the Church of England, August 24th, that year?"

Gerry took a jump, and exclaimed, "Why, that's what we come from, I vow!"

"Well who's we?"

"Why, we Dissenters, we English Presbyterians! I remember all about it now, my boy. I've heard Aunt Carry speak about it, but never saw into the matter so clearly before."

"I suspect my dad knew and thought more about it than yours, Gerry."

Tramp, tramp, splash, splash, water above, water below, on they tramped in silence. Harry in silent enthusiasm; Gerry, succumbing at length to atmospheric influences and thoughts of Leadenhall Street, grunts out, "Precious dull road this of yours."

"Dull! Bless you, I never think about that," cried Harry.

"If I were cantering along on my little Gypsey, or walking over purple heather, with a mountain or two in the distance——"

"Gerry, that is insufferably weak of you. What used you to preach to me, you old hypocrite? That we must subdue the *outward*, triumph over it, be independent of it—to be sure it was a great lesson, but not to *teach* only," and, flinging out his arm, he cried, with a mixture of zeal and mock enthusiasm, "Oh, the

grandeur of rising above these petty accidents, and wretched little clogs of circumstance. Look here. You read a stirring history of what brave men did five hundred years ago in Guelderland and Bohemia, or what they did last June in Greenland, Bengal, or Panama. Doesn't it crowd your brain with thoughts and plans for doing, with God's help, good work of your own, as bravely and successfully? That *used* to be my Gerry's tune."

"Aye," replied his friend, rather pensively. "Just as one used to make wooden swords after reading 'Ivanhoe,' and sally forth to attack the thistles."

"Bah! there you go again!" and Harry shook his fist threateningly at his friend. "But I tell you this—I remember you used to say you wouldn't give twopence for a boy who had never longed to be a knight errant and to bring back the age of chivalry. (Quentin Durward though, by-the-bye, was my favourite hero.) And, ah! Master Gerry, then you led one on from that to see the real knightly work to be done *now*. Do you know," and he lowered his voice as if half-ashamed of himself, "I have been reading the lives of Martyn and John Williams. What a glorious work they did!"

Gerald looked at his friend with no little interest, but also surprise. "You don't mean you would like to be a missionary—preach to naked savages, and be eaten by your converts?"

"Not exactly," returned Harry, with another demonstration of his fist and a shade of real annoyance, for he was a good deal more in earnest than he liked to show. "No, for I haven't enough faith or religion, or whatever you call it."

"It would take a good deal for that work, I guess," answered Gerry, rather dismally. There was always a curious conflict going on in his mind between his airy æsthetic tastes and romantic fancies, and his genuine desire to relieve the distresses of mankind. The former sought for artistic enjoyment, the latter urged him to self-sacrificing effort. But it was a critical point in Harry's life, and a "double-minded man" like Gerry could give him no true effectual help. Gerry was a very lovable, noble-hearted friend; but Harry needed then far more than that.

As they returned from their "constitutional," they met an undergraduate friend of Fortescue's. "Will you come and wine with us after hall, old fellow?" quoth Harry. A gracious acceptance being given he called after him, "and bring a friend." So after a snug little dinner in Harry's rooms, he and Gerald welcomed two studious youths, and the party sat over their wine and weeds round the open window looking forth upon the *hospitium*-like rows

of stone buildings,* and on the old trees and the turf, and the jack-daws; and rich pabulum was poured into the poor London clerk's hungering soul, for the whole party were in a frame of mind and body which no traditions of a golden age can be considered to equal. And what Gerald so richly enjoyed thus for a week, scores of young fellows at England's Universities enjoy month after month for years. Care and grief, wasting toil, disappointment and defeat, remorse, bereavement, might all be awaiting them in the years to come,—were, alas! at that moment busy enough around them then. But what a lot was falling meanwhile to their portion—something to be thankful for, I trow!

And doubtless there is at least "one" in "ten" who "returns to give thanks," conscious how much they have to be thankful for. Yes, it's a glorious thing, that University life; but even over that life there's the "old serpent's trail," in more ways than one.

It was Sunday evening, and the young men, sitting on a bench in Trinity College gardens, mused pensively on their approaching separation, which was to take place the following morning. They had been both to St. Mary's and to King's that afternoon, and Gerald, profoundly sensible to the influences of the place, yielded to his better self, and was mourning unaffectedly over the barriers which divided him from the Church of Latimer and Jeremy Taylor.

He told Fortescue how his heart yearned towards a true "Holy Catholic Church"—a veritable and blessed "Communion of Saints"—told him how deeply he longed to see the end of all barriers between sincere Christians.

"I can't see why we shouldn't all belong to one Church, Harry."

"So thought Archbishop Sheldon, and therefore he got the Act of Uniformity passed; and there has been more dissent and wrangling, and seared consciences and broken hearts since, as I've often heard my father say, than ever before."

"Well, it's beyond me," replied his friend, "but tell me more about your father. I suppose he hadn't much time, with all his parish work, to give to you."

"Hadn't he, though!" exclaimed Fortescue, and the young fellow's eyes glistened, and he raised his athletic form from the bench where he had been reclining, his whole frame trembling with excitement. "Time! Gerald Arlington, he gave himself up to me as never father—" his voice quivered.

"I want to know more about him, Harry," said Gerald,

* The College and the Inn were closely united in former days—now it's the Inn and the Drinkery that are allied.

gently. "Can't you tell me a little of him? You often said you would."

Laying his hand on Arlington's arm, Harry began in a hurried way: "Oh, my dear fellow, I could never tell you what my father was to me. But I'll try a bit, if you like. He lost my mother when I was about four years old. She was quite young when she died; they had only been married about five years. Though so young at the time, I can never forget his grief. After the funeral, he had come up to his bed-room and didn't know I had been stowed away in my crib to cry myself to sleep. His entrance, though he came on tip-toe, woke me, but I lay quite still, until I could no longer bear to hear him sobbing, and when he heard me calling, 'Father, father,' the poor man's trouble was terrible to see. I thought those days of wretchedness would never come to an end. But all at once, he seemed to have conquered his misery. He had always been active in visiting his poor folks, but now he took to playing cricket and quoits with them, and without slackening his attentions as a pastor, took to boating, riding, and fishing, besides. But go where he would, he took his little boy with him, sometimes clapping me on the back of an almost invisible Sheltie, called 'Minimus,' and making me scamper after him across the beautiful commons and heathery hills, or bowling to me and the other lads, with indomitable patience by the hour together, on the village green. He *was* a dear old dad!"

"Had you any sisters?"

"Only my half-sister, Nelly. Her mother was an Irish Viscount's daughter, and had been married before, and left a widow at two-and-twenty. My sister was her daughter, and a dear creature, Gerry, she is: no doubt of that. But haven't seen much of her altogether—not half as much as would have been good for me. After my mother's death she went to live at Neville Court, the family place in Surrey, with an aunt who has taken precious good care of her. Capital old lady, though a bit of a querity. I shall run down for a week or two this vacation, and that'll be jolly, I vow."

"I suppose your father taught you entirely himself?"

"Yes, in the classics, history, and so forth. An old dominie came from Marston for the mathematics. I never went to school till I was fifteen, and then I think my father just gave up the fight with his troubles, and said, 'I'm beaten now.' In two years he was in his grave. God rest him!"

"I can't think how you became—at least home-bred boys are generally such——"

"Soft sawnies—true, but I was well knocked about among the

farmers' boys, and the sons of the gentry in their holidays. After I was nine, my father never protected me. He taught me to box, among my other accomplishments, and desperate fights I used to get into—generally for fun, though. He never let me fight in a passion, if he could help it. I did thoroughly enjoy the wild life I led down there, but the descriptions of school existence, which I got from some of the Eton and Rugby fellows when they came home for vacation, made me bother my good dad, I fear, a little too much to let me go with them. So at length he gave me up, and the last light of his desolate home went out. I didn't know what I was to him, Gerry," he added, in a husky voice, "or I never would have gone. Yet it was the right thing, no doubt, for me."

So he ran on as long as Arlington's questions urged him. At length they rose, and as they walked back to their college to tea, Gerry remarked, "I'll tell you what it is, Harry, that I specially enjoy in you, with all deference, and I wish to Heaven you would give me the secret. You are never down in the mouth, old boy—don't seem to know what the 'blues' are. I do honour a man who is always cheerful. I don't mean always jolly. That's quite another pair of shoes, and comes of treble X or brandy-and-water, pretty often. Besides, those drinking fellows are as seedy as hemp, and as flat as a balloon when the gas is out of them."

"Behold the secret, then, my gentle youth," replied Harry, with dignity, as he took out a cigar-case and began to light. "Gerry, the great mistake in your life is, that you won't smoke."

"You be hanged! It's a vile habit, doctor. I tried once, you know, and am as certain that it's only a milder form of opium-eating as that it did me a precious deal of mischief."

"Gammon," remarked Harry, between the puffs.

"Why, you yourself," answered Gerald, "said the other day that lots of fellows here damaged themselves by it——"

"Ah, in excess. Many would be worse without it."

"May be, because they've nothing better to keep the devil down with. But, depend upon it, smoking's a capital thing to make a nation of sawnies or sensualists in three generations. There'd have been no Reformation in Germany, nor Elizabethan age or 'Great Rebellion' in England, if fellows had smoked then as they do now. Why you, of all men, know we can't shirk our fighting without being sneaks, and all these drugs are only dodges to save us from trouble and fighting, and make us lie down to be tickled and whipped. I guess you learned how to be always cheerful in some other way than through that nasty stink."

"By George," cried Harry, laughing, "I believe you're right!"

Then in a soberer tone he continued, "Well, look here, my friend ; I learned to be cheerful, like many other things, of him who is sleeping in Beachum churchyard. I told you how miserable he was after my mother's death. Years after, as we sat one evening on the top of Lockerby Hill, and watched the sunset, he gave me a glimpse into all that had passed in his inner life at that time of woe. He had taken a huge, long walk one evening, some two or three months after the funeral, and came to that very spot where we were then sitting. There he knelt down and prayed God to take him, and so save him from suicide, for he dreaded touching his razors or going near the river. But 'a spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind,' he said, came sweeping down on his soul from the Holy One, and he rose up and said, 'I'll have no more of this,' and went on his way, ever after that, calm and strong, doing his parish duty with glorious heartiness and enjoying what he might till, ten years later, he sent me to school. He seemed to fling all his misery away, or to have it flung away for him (something of both, I suppose), and kept only a calm, holy sorrow in some inner fold of his heart, which he never looked at, except now and then, by firelight, or in the desolate night watches. At other times he laughed, talked, read, played, and became quite a hearty, rather jovial sort of individual. No, I don't mean that," said he, smiling at Gerald's perplexed physiognomy, "for he kept little company, and drank nothing but water ; but only a very cheery gentleman, full of life and animal spirits, and so he made me the same. God bless him for that."

"Did he seem to like his pulpit duties?"

"I believe you—the preaching part ; but I've told you about the other. After my mother's death he touched the folks' hearts as he had never done before. He was not always at his ease among the prayers, I thought, but I don't know. He was a true and faithful pastor—that I do know. And I would there were many like him—and I would he were here now !"

That pleasant evening, like all things bad and good in the world, came at last to an end—doubtless to the reader's relief. So did this Cambridge visit.

It was the last evening of Gerald's visit. Both he and Harry were reflecting on that inevitable fact somewhat sorrowfully next morning at the breakfast table—Gerald, in fact, being exceedingly dismal—when the gyp brought a letter for Fortescue, whose flashing eyes as he read its contents suggested to Gerald the quarter whence it came.

"Well," quoth Harry, as he handed over the epistle to Gerald,

"that's queer. I suppose I mustn't go. But oh! Jupiter, what a temptation!"

The letter was an invitation from Alfred Featherstone and his parents to join them in an excursion next month to the Lakes.

Gerald's sympathetic heart bounded with joy. Harry was wild with rapture, but he pretended and tried to take it very quietly.

"Mustn't go, did you say, Harry? Ah! you had settled to stay up and read—read very hard. Of course, you think I believe you'll do it?"

And Gerald laughed a sardonic laugh, such as disappointed young lovers laugh in Adelphi dramas, or in his favourite Bulwer's early romances. But he rejoiced greatly amid his own gloom at his friend's joy, and knew nothing was more likely to keep that friend straight.

"Go? You must go," he said.

"Well, I think it's very probable," at length replied Harry, with a serious air, as of a highly conscientious man anxious to discover the perplexing path of duty, "that—that—I might be able to work much better after such a thorough change."

So they took a final row "in the ditch," as Gerry insultingly termed it, and then a farewell stroll in Trinity Gardens.

"Will it be better or worse in Leadenhall Street after this?" inquired Harry, in reply to Gerry's enthusiastic acknowledgment of "a very jolly visit."

"Better! A hundred times, old boy. You'll see how I shall work"—(was he referring to his nightly studies, or to the Custom House?)—"and I'll do my duty in Leadenhall Street," he added, with a touch of remorse, as he drew a hard breath and set his teeth; "and what's your last word about yourself, Harry?"

"This—that when a man truly loves and honours a woman, God rolls back the primal curse, and the devil flies howling!"

A little before three p.m. the two friends were shaking hands in front of the "Beehive Hotel," the coachman appeared, and the visit was at an end.

"Write to me from the Lakes," said Gerry, as he turned to his friend.

"I will; and Heaven bless us both! Good-bye, my hearty!"

CHAPTER XII.

It was a fair summer evening, and the party in yonder boat, gliding along the western shore of Windermere, under the shadow of Wray Castle, seem to think it so.

The elderly gentleman and his wife are undoubtedly Mr. and Mrs. Featherstone, so that handsome girl (who would be in an elegant attitude, even if standing at a wash-tub) and that shy, fawn-like maiden opposite to her must be their two daughters. There's no mistaking the rugged-featured phiz of the stalwart "stroke," nor the genial frank expression on it, softened at that hour with an indescribably touching and romantic influence, such as fine-natured manly fellows wear when desperately, hopefully, or even half-despondingly in love. Bow oar, of course, is hilarious, handsome brother Alfred, delighting himself with occasionally catching crabs on purpose, and at suitable intervals, in a variety of ways, alarming his respected mamma.

Harry Fortescue was not naturally romantic. No; decidedly not. But that evening the earth seemed to him steeped in hues of Paradise. He breathed a different air from aught that had ever touched his lungs before, and the blood went bounding through his veins. Had he not been walking with Adelaide Featherstone for an hour over those beautiful hills above Bowness, lingering far behind the rest, and finding that she listened to him with increasing interest—that the haughty look of indifference gave place to a pleased smile, and a softer glance than he had ever seen in those bright eyes before? Had she not let him clamber up a dangerous bit of rock (not without protest) and bring her a lovely spray of fern, which she had admired? And did she not fasten it in those rich dark tresses that swept so fascinatingly down her beautiful face? Would she not answer at length to his passionate devotion, and let him take her to himself, and whisper, "My own—my wife!"

The boat touched the shore. Leila had nimbly skipped out after Alfred, and watched Fortescue hand forth the rest—watched, shall I say, with something like a sigh, the enraptured look of Adelaide's adorer, as he bent low before his queen, steadying the boat with one hand, and glancing timidly up at her face while she leaned upon the other. Yet there was not a particle of jealousy, scarcely a shade of envy, in her heart. But she knew her sister better than Harry Fortescue did, and so, while she hoped for his happiness,

she doubted and trembled rather more than to most people would have seemed necessary. Adelaide was very amiable at tea, had never appeared to greater advantage; but when the sisters were parting for the night she made a remark upon her admirer which sent a sharp retort to Leila's lips, and an hour later hot tears of indignation filled the poor child's eyes as she mused over them, and all the events of their tour, in her little room beneath the quiet light of the stars. "He is so good and noble," thought she, "and Adelaide will never make him happy—I shouldn't mind if only—but she doesn't care for him a bit. . . Oh, Mr. Fortescue, if I *could* give you her whole heart it should be yours. If she really loved you, I know you would make her all that is good and noble. . . But it seems so very sad he should be loving and caring about her, and she only making fun of it all. . . ."

Then she prayed for them—it was all she could do, except crying, and this was decidedly less likely to be of use than her prayers.

One more scene.

It was a picture worth looking at, if you cared for those concerned in it. Our two fair damsels, with their gallant attendants, to wit Harry assisting Miss Featherstone, and Alfred petting "my little Lilybell," went clambering over boulders and heather, stone walls and dilapidated hedges, sometimes catching a lovely glimpse of blue Windermere, and then rejoicing in the dark majesty of Fairfield or Loughrigg Fell. At length they halted in a little field above Ambleside, that commanded a magnificent view of the gorge formed by Nab Scar on the right and Loughrigg on the left. The sun had just set behind Steel Fell. Dark masses of cloud hung heavily over the whole range of mountains from Red Scree to Conistoun Old Man, but a bright glowing strip of sky still stretched away between dark cloud and darker mountain, into which the jagged peaks and edges of rock and 'fell' rose sharp and clear. Beneath this line of light, which gave a bright weird wildness to the distant scene, the mountains and valley lay in purple shadow, through which could be dimly seen the yet darker lines of intersection, with here and there black masses of foliage, formed by picturesque groups of Scotch firs. The young wanderers stood long watching the grandeur of the scene. All the better part of Alfred's nature came out in these quiet walks with Leila, but Adelaide's company too often only seemed to provoke him into a display of sarcastic worldliness. He and his younger sister had had very pleasant chat that evening, chiefly about Schiller and Art. Carlyle's beautiful biography of the German poet (introduced to

their notice some time before by Gerald) was warmly admired by both, and Alfred had been giving his sister some notion of the harmonies of colour, and their relation, as he conceived of it, to poetry and dramatic art. But now they gave themselves up in silent happiness to the influences of the place and hour, and were not sorry to see Fortescue gradually leading Adelaide away towards a grove, at the side of the hill.

"Well, my little sister," quoth Alfred at last, "and what do you think this sunset, sky, and earth are like?" Leila never felt shy with him as she did with everybody else (Nelly, of late, excepted). They had been play-fellows as children, and to him she could pour out the repressed enthusiasm of her imagination.

"Schiller makes me think it like the crowning glories of a great patriot's life—or of a devout lion-hearted Crusader. '*So stirbt ein Held*' . . . you remember—"

"Go on," said Alfred.

"It makes me think of my hero," continued Leila, still gazing on the sky and mountains, "as having been full of stern valour, desperate daring, massive strength; that is the dark mountain ridge yonder, and yet above it all such a mild, lofty, buoyant hopefulness, such up-looking reverence, such a glowing light of faith in his heart, of almost playful cheerfulness—you see it all there in that sky—such a fierce victorious joy, too, in conflict, hardship, suffering."

"Go on,"—but she did not. Her thoughts seemed lost in the grand twilight distance.

"Do you see nothing of what befalls him? Is it not the crowning moment of his life?"

"No," she continued, hurriedly, "that has passed. That moment was the hour of victory! But now I behold the great, terrible hero, coming back from his awful fight, and passing calmly on through all the nation's applause—and now—he comes, demanding a fair maiden for his bride, whom he had long passionately loved, and now she is peeping at him from behind the lattice, filled with admiration,—"

"Go on."

"And yet, possessed by a nameless terror; but he looks up towards her, and then her fear is swallowed up in a rapturous gratitude and reverence! Oh, Alfred, what nonsense you are making me talk!" and she stopped, half-frightened. Her brother looked at her with sympathizing, slightly wondering, and amused expression—

"Nay, nay, go on, Dolly, dear, you are giving me inspiration—"

subjects for my brush. You are my poet, and I'll paint your dreams, you know. Go on."

"Oh, that's capital," cried Lily, clapping her hands.

"But, look, Lily! the sky is changing—the great cloud-bank is breaking up in storm rifts. See that fierce, lurid light thrown upon it, and the bright gleams sweeping through—"

"Yes, yes," cried Leila, dancing about for a moment, and throwing up her arms like a Pythoness. "It is a mad Berserkir revel, the night before a terrible battle is going to be fought!"

"Eh! But look at the perfect stillness of the scene."

"That, oh son of the Vikings! that is because thou lookest on the revel through the long solemn vista of ages. Beheld historically, the fields of Chalons and Tours are calm, even as a painting. But look again: that lurid glare, those rugged streamers on the blast, speak not of repose!" Then, after a long pause, "Brother, such scenes are God-like."

"So, Lilybell? I thought religious people always spoke of God as calm and tranquil?"

"Is He not the God of Battles also? The Lord of Hosts, is not that His name? Do you never think of Him as wielding terrible power, engaged in awful conflict? 'Who is this that cometh from Edom—with dyed garments from Bozrah? the blood of His enemies sprinkled on His raiment?'" Her eyes gleamed so wildly that Alfred now glanced at her with more wonderment than before. At his first words, however, the rapt expression passed, and she sank into the loving little sister, looking up into his face with playful affection.

"My Lily! let us have an elegantly bound volume—'Recollections of the Lakes, by G. A.'"

"Horrible!" she exclaimed.

"'With twenty-five illustrations from the pencil of Alfred Featherstone, Esq.'"

"Charming! Capital! Oh, that is jolly! But mind!—without the 'Recollections.' Oh, Alfred, perhaps, if you take real pains with all these sketches in finishing them up, papa will let you be a regular artist after all. You know he only cares about your having a proper profession—steady employment of some kind—and you know he is right there. You never can be happy without, can you, dearest? And you've often told me how bad idleness is for you."

"I wish we could always work and walk together as we've been doing lately, Dolly. God knows how sometimes—" he said no more, but the deep, almost despairing sadness of his tone and manner sent a cold shiver through Leila's heart.

"Well, what have you done with the others?" sharply inquired Mrs. Featherstone, as her son and youngest daughter appeared. "I don't like such late rambles," and her voice grew sharper. She began to think gratitude might go too far, for since they had arrived at Windermere, she had found out that Neville Court would not come to Harry, even if his sister died unmarried. She knew that her handsome daughter must not throw herself away in this fashion, and determined to speak as plainly as she durst (for even she found it hard fighting with the said daughter's self-will), about poor curates, and especially when they were not sound in the faith (for Harry had lashed out now and then). She knew well how the young lady's pride and ambition might both be touched to the quick.

* * * * *

"Then Mr. Fortescue is going on to Keswick? A good job, too," said Mrs. Featherstone, half aside to her husband, the next morning, as the family trunks were being fastened on a travelling carriage. "And you'll come home with us, Alfred, dear?"

"Yes, mother," replied her son, "he's going to walk about forty miles a day, and that don't suit my book. Besides, he rejected my offered company—offered of course only for politeness' sake, dear mammy, I couldn't do less. But he's gone! Ah me! gone forth into the 'drear lonely future,' as somebody hath it," and he glanced mischievously at Adelaide, who if he hadn't done that, might have felt compelled to repress just the slightest possible tendency to tears.

Yes, Harry Fortescue had taken leave the night before, and departed that morning before any of the rest of the party had appeared, except the youthful Leila, who insisted upon getting up and making him a cup of coffee. She moved about mechanically, and Harry thought her, as he had before, a strange, cold-hearted child, until he turned to her to say "good-bye," and then she looked up at him. Something of the prophetic fire, we suppose, had rushed unbidden to her eyes, something of a divine pity and reverence, for he started as he met her look, and murmured, "God bless you," and hastened away. Leila, it must be confessed, was rather sharp-tempered for some days after. In fact, Adelaide complained of her to the mamma, and privately observed to Leila herself that she was a regular little savage. Perhaps she would have been even more like one could she have read

HARRY'S LETTER TO GERRY.

"Rosethwaite, August 24th, 1832.

"DEAR GERRY,—Many thanks for your letter and hearty con-

gratulations. You little guessed in what state it would find me. Yes, it *was* all bright and blessed. I did not say a word too much to you of what I felt, for I was indeed in Heaven. Ah! my Gerry, no words can tell how beautiful—how divinely beautiful—was the world I lived in, for a few days, nay weeks; for the passing cloud—the transient doubts and fears, and cold chills—only made the returning smile and sunshine more exquisite. But it is gone—gone for ever. The old, old story. She has an ambitious, worldly mother, and I am ‘unreliable,’ ‘prospects uncertain,’ I suppose. And she herself, oh Adelaide, Adelaide! why may I not say, my Adelaide? Yet her hand has lain in mine. Bah! bosh! She has no more heart, Gerry, than a Medusa or a codfish. So let’s hear nothing more about her. I’ll just add that there was a great change, horrid haughtiness, sarcastic coldness, curse her! No, no, what am I writing? I’m half crazy. But at length I saw my room would be more welcome than my company, told them I was off the next day, got one last walk with her by hard manœuvring, grew desperate, and—. But before I was off, next morning, God mercifully gave me a last blessing that I might not even for one dark hour hate Him and all His creatures. That quaint young sister of hers, who has a far greater depth of character than perhaps we thought, came down before six, to try and make me have some breakfast before I went, and then, so gently and compassionately, so tenderly, yet shyly seemed wishing to bid me bear up bravely, when I said ‘good-bye,’ that I shall feel grateful to her to the last hour of my life. One feels that sort of thing a good deal under some circumstances.

“This glorious scenery and mountain air is very blessed: while I am walking through the long days I rise above the sorrow. So don’t trouble about me. It is only at night, alone at the inns, I feel it. So good-bye, my boy, I mean to be at Neville Court on the 31st for a few days’ shooting, and then to Caius, for a brave six months’ work.—Ever yours, H. F.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE greater quadrangle of Caius College was looking murky and dreary; the late October day was dismal. But Alfred Featherstone, sauntering through it towards Fortescue’s rooms about 11 a.m., looked serene as usual, with that devil-may-care expression of his,

and good-humoured jaunty roll in his gait. Knock, knock, knock. No answer. Oak not sported, must be at home—knock away. Door flung open at last in a fury. Harry stands glaring at his visitor in a rage. Cools down a little when he sees who it is. Sullenly offers chair. Alfred looks about. Furniture in unwonted positions. Beautiful tea-chest given by sister Ellen lying in a corner, smashed to fragments. “Hullo!” quoth Alfred, “how’s this?”—“Never mind.”—“But I do mind”——

“No matter. Found myself in one corner and the tea-chest in another—just now.”

Alfred thought it was getting serious. Resolved to comfort him. “What a noodle you are, my dear fellow! Leila’s worth two dozen of her.” The dose was a stinger, but wonderfully efficacious:—polarized all his heart-atoms, probably, just in another direction, for he quietly gripped Alfred’s hand, till the latter, wincing, meekly observed, “Thank you,” adding, “Look here, man, here’s a letter you haven’t opened. Isn’t it from your virtuous, poetic cricketer? Come, let’s hear about him. You say his yarns always brighten you up.”

But this present yarn didn’t have that effect. An angel’s epistle would then have been read by Harry *en noir*. And this was from one “a little lower than the angels.” After a few platitudes, in the way of consolation and exhortation, which Harry didn’t read aloud, the letter continued thus:—“Depend upon it, Harry, that girl was not worthy of a love like yours, and the true Juliet is still waiting for you somewhere. I’m very glad her sister gave you that one drop of comfort. She’s a regular little witch, and a bit of a genius—but somehow I always fancy there’s something not quite safe about her; a sort of Undine?—a bit of a sorceress. However, let’s throw the sex overboard, and go in for something higher than all this sentimentalism and passion. I wish you were coming to town soon. I have formed a sort of small literary club, which is highly refreshing, and stimulates one to work. We meet once a week and read papers, and then discuss them. I have given them one on ‘Charles I.’ and ‘Cromwell,’ and worked up for it pretty hard, from Hallam and Godwin’s ‘History of the Commonwealth.’ Cromwell was a grand fellow, and I have whitewashed him—for the benefit of posterity! We had three nights at that. I have now proposed this question: ‘To what Degree and under what Circumstances did the Nations of Antiquity contribute to the Civilization of the world?’ Each member is to take a particular nation, tribe, or city, and I am going to write the Introductory Essay.”—“Of course you are,” growled Harry, half to himself, as he read this sentence.

"You're in a bad humour this morning, doctor," observed Featherstone, sarcastically. "Why shouldn't he?"

"Oh, I don't know; I'm not fit to criticise a fellow like him. Nor are you either, Fred. He's a long shot beyond us both. But if you will have it, don't you see he cares a vast deal too much about sympathy and admiration, and all that sort of thing, and works a great deal more for that, I'm sometimes afraid, than to gain knowledge or to give it. But that's all a lie, and I know it."

"And you, you lazy beggar, don't work for anything."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Harry, "you're a fine fellow to come slanging me about work! But you're quite right. I am a lazy old devil, maundering and pottering about in this rat-trap, and by the gods, I'll have no more of it. I'll work, work! Come and wine with me; but now be *off!*" and he motioned Featherstone frantically to the door, while he rushed to his bookcase and tore down half-a-dozen books. The amiable Alfred's benevolent designs were so far effected. His friend was roused from his morbid collapse; but before Alfred departed, he laid his hand persuasively on Harry's shoulder, and, looking with twinkling smiles in his face, said, "But now you'll come a little more among us, my boy. Just a little more larking now and then. It's wonderfully good for the spirits. Farewell."

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While all these events, so interesting, no doubt, to the parties concerned, were going forward, the nation at large went about its business with a placid and sometimes grateful consciousness of having accomplished a mighty revolution without bloodshed, and placed England once more in the van of political progress and national liberty among the nations of the world. But for all that, fear and sorrow, crushing anguish in many and many a home, had been and still were blanching the cheek and making the heart chill. The grim foe had come at last. For months before, it had been an occasional topic of conversation. Round comfortable firesides, in the lobby of the House of Commons, in the quadrangles of many an hospital, and in crowded tap-rooms, speculation had been rife as to whether "*Cholera morbus*" would really ever get as far as our shores. From India to England was a very long way. But Constantinople was much nearer. Still, the plague often ravaged those parts, and we were none the worse. Oh, it was all right enough, never fear. . . . But on, and on, and on it came, creeping or leaping, day by day. Up the Danube, down the Vistula, over the Carpathians, till Vienna and Berlin were like pest-houses. Then Englishmen began to tremble. The Blue Torture

was certainly striding steadily westward. No earthly power can stop it. "It is at Paris!" "Hundreds—thousands are dying daily." . . . At length we hear the words: *THE CHOLERA IS IN ENGLAND*, and many a stout brave heart of man and woman for a moment sickened with fear and grief at the terrible announcement. It was its first visitation, and people's ignorance naturally magnified its terrors and increased its danger.

One morning, when Gerald came to the counting-house, he found a junior clerk and a rough looking man keeping guard at the entrance. "Can't go in, sir; Mr. Ainsworth died here of cholera last night. Seized about seven o'clock—a corpse at midnight. Books all taken to Billiter Square, sir, at Messrs. Harrisons."

"It's coming home to us with a vengeance," thought young Arlington. The docks looked very melancholy to him that day. Many a ship had got the yellow flag flying, and hardy fellows who had been helping the medical man round the bed or hammock of a poor wretch, twisting in the agonies of the disease, looked more serious or scared than they had ever done before in their lives.

"Mr. Arlington," said the family apothecary, one morning to that gentleman, just before he started for the city, "I don't like the looks of your son at all. I'm certain he's overdoing it. Mrs. Arlington admits that he often sits up half the night. If you remember, he had a bad attack of spasmodic cholic last summer, and I told her then he wouldn't stand the life he was leading. She confessed yesterday that he has never been really well since, and she wished me to talk to you about it."

"Thank you, doctor—thank you. I must stop that studying and writing. He hasn't got the stamina for it. I never liked that literary society he has established."

Mr. Arlington drew a heavy sigh as he slowly paced from the gate on his handsome chestnut, for he thought how his son's whole interest was evidently centred in the said society, and in his studies for it. He saw the conflict between Duty and Inclination; and saw, too, the civil war growing more and more inevitable between himself and his son.

He must, at all events, save his health, that was the first thing.

Before he left town that evening he sent for Gerald, and spoke kindly, but decisively.

"There must be an end to all this study work. You'll be killing yourself soon, at the present rate."

"I don't see much use in living if I can do nothing but——" answered Gerald, then stopped, his whole frame trembling with

excitement. Mr. Arlington looked at him in great astonishment. His son was little accustomed to speak to him in tones like these.

"You can still attend your society, if you like," he at length answered, kindly. "But Mr. Oakshaw says you mustn't study for it."

"There is no good in going, father, if I cannot prepare for it . . . Besides . . ." And thoughts, hopes, and resolves, with which we are only too familiar, came surging up, and choked his utterance. But his poor father, too, was on no bed of roses. Here was something perfectly new—the character of this son of his. Alas! for his parental dreams. He rode home sorrowfully; while his son galloped frantically down the Hackney Road, and over the Essex (Lea-bridge) meadows, or marshes as they were unjustly called, at a rate that equally astonished and delighted Gypsy.

The meeting of the society the following night was at Mr. James Pierce's lodgings in University Street. Ned Grant, Bob Nicholson, and about half-a-dozen others, chiefly University men, were present. (Hackett had been black-balled at the starting of the Club.) Tea having been disposed of, Pierce, as chairman for the evening, opened the ball. But Gerald was to be the hero of that night. How he had looked forward to it! as the occasion on which he was to read his introductory essay on the noble question, which at least he deserved some credit for propounding.

But until he drew forth his MS. his soul was dark within him. Like a hunted hart (to adopt a highly original metaphor) with a yelling pack of wolves on his track—Ambition, Imagination, Egotism, Love, Craving for Applause, Benevolence, Poetic fire, filial Duty, fatal Disease, all madly hounding him on: he doubled sometimes in one direction, sometimes in another. More than one of his friends noticed that he looked ill, and even grunting Bob forbore to be satirical. As the young essayist proceeded with his paper, it must be confessed a half-suppressed grunt now and then from the said Bob of indignant contempt for the flowery, long-winded sentences was occasionally audible; but not to the reader, and by degrees the whole party, even Bob himself, were listening with fixed attention, and no slight interest. Most of them thought the composition splendid. A fine *esprit de corps* made them exult in young Arlington's undoubted power of thought and beauty of language in spite of all his exaggerations. He himself was carried away by his subject—warmed into a fine enthusiasm, "and with his forehead touched the stars of Heaven," when suddenly he dropped his MS., and started from his seat with a cry of pain. All were in confusion. "No matter—it's nothing

at all—I've felt it before—I beg your pardon—" and he resumed his reading. His favourite paragraph, the eloquent winding up was just finished . . . a murmur of applause and congratulation was buzzing round.—It was a moment of intense happiness. . . . Pierce was watching the young orator uneasily. . . .

Ten minutes later, a medical student, just coming out of the University College gates, shouted out, "Hullo, Pierce! what are you in a blaze about?" as that individual rushed by him.

"Running a race with Death!" cried Pierce, without pausing. Then, as the other came rattling after him, he slackened his pace and bawled over his shoulder, "Cholera at my lodgings! Send a nurse and brandy!" Then he was off again like a shot for the nearest of the Professors, who had been specially treating the fatal scourge in London.

Half-an-hour passed, and a man was scudding along through the dark night, up Pentonville Hill, through Islington, Dalston, Clapton, into Essex, as fast as his horse could lay legs to the ground, and so on to Hartland House. An hour or two more, and Mr. and Mrs. Arlington were standing at the bedside of their beloved boy, racked with anguish to see his tortures, and never feeling so intensely how they loved him, and how utterly helpless was their human love.

Mr. Grant had been most friendly and useful. The moment poor Ned burst into the drawing-room with the dismal news, Anne Grant, as well as her mother, begged permission to go and nurse the sufferer, for in such a moment the conventionalisms of life seem to shrivel up before the flame of genuine Christian sympathy. But when Ned said that Nicholson had run for a professional nurse, according to Pierce's instructions, Mr. Grant insisted on no one stirring out but himself.

Hour after hour dragged on. Everything was done that skill and tenderness could do in the brief period within which the battle must be fought. But all seemed in vain.

"Everything depends, dear madam," replied the eminent physician, who was fighting the monster, as if his own life depended upon it—"everything now depends upon the success of this new remedy. I have great faith in these saline injections into the blood. I have seen wonderful cures, at the Middlesex and elsewhere, during the last few days, by this means."

Minute after minute went on. The sobbing groans of the patient had ceased. A dead stillness pervaded the room. Is it indeed death? You cannot hear him breathe. See, he moves! Is it the last throes?—No—he is trying—yes, trying to take a ring off his

poor twisted finger—strives to murmur something. His mother bends down, with oh! such a passionate prayer going up from her heart. "Harry!" whispered the sufferer.—"Yes, dear, I understand. You want me to give this to him." . . . Minute after minute went by. Once more there is absolute silence. Is it death now? Listen for his breathing. . . . No, there is work for him still to do in the world . . . he is not "perfected" yet.

"Madam, your son is safe," whispered the physician. "See, he sleeping," and the father and mother knelt by the bedside, in thanksgiving prayer.

The next evening, Harry Fortescue sat by his poor friend's bedside, holding one of his cold hands, and saying a few words now and then of hearty cheer and loving sympathy.

The patient slowly mended. Mr. and Mrs. Arlington had hired rooms next door, and many an anxious thought passed through the minds of both concerning their son's future course. One evening they were talking in Pierce's sitting-room with one of the classical Professors of the college, who had come in to see his former pupil. Harry was seated unnoticed in a corner; Gerald was supposed to be asleep in the next room.

"Excuse me, Mr. Arlington," said the Professor, to whom Harry had given a hint as to the state of things, "but I don't think you quite appreciate your son's abilities. I believe if you could give him two or three years more with us, he might take high rank in several ways—for instance, as a literary man, or in Parliament," he added, seeing Mr. Arlington's uneasiness; then continued, "this essay," and he tapped poor Gerald's "Introductory," which had been picked up from the floor the day after it had been read, and narrowly escaped the useful office of lighting the parlour fire, "this essay is rather an uncommon production for his years, and the whole conception of the plan is admirable."

"Yes, yes, my dear sir, I can believe all you say," answered Mr. Arlington, "and I thank you for it; but I haven't the means of supporting him all his life as a literary man, or as a member of Parliament; and without an assured independence I am thoroughly convinced that such a life would be a miserable slavery, fatal to all that is highest and best for him here, and hereafter. Besides, he has not the constitution for such a career. We have had warning enough—"

"He was attempting too much—"

"He would be *always* attempting too much if we once gave him his head among these pursuits. You scarcely know the ill-regulated, passionate enthusiasm of his nature, my dear sir. If he

were again to escape death by sudden illness, our medical man, who has known him from a child, says he is certain to go off in a decline if he studies hard; and that his only chance of average health is that he should be occupied with matter-of-fact business and active pursuits."

"Then, sir," said Harry, rising and coming forward, "if I may be permitted to speak, the sword will wear out the sheath as fast as if he were studying. His mind would prey on itself—"

"That depends, Mr. Fortescue," answered the father rather sternly, "upon whether my son is a rational and moral being. If he cannot bring himself under the yoke of Duty, and give up his dearest wishes at the command of Duty, and yet live on cheerfully and usefully, he is not the man to succeed in *anything*; nor, I may add, is he the young man I take him to be." His compressed lip and contracted brow showed the deep and painful working of the father's mind, and the words were uttered in a way that forbade further controversy. Later in the evening, Mr. Arlington thanked the Professor warmly for the kind and favourable opinion he had expressed concerning his son's capacities, and of the introductory Essay, and pressed him, though not very fervently, to visit them at Hartland as soon as Gerald was well enough to be removed.

The last night before Gerald left Pierce's lodgings he was thanking his host (who had coyly received a good fee from Mr. Arlington) very heartily for all his attention and kindness.

"Pooh-pooh!" quoth that young gentleman, with a slightly self-complacent smile, "merely professional, you know. Extremely interesting case, you see—very useful to beginners. Glad we pulled you through, though—near squeak, by gad! wasn't it? By George, I thought you were booked when I came back with old Square toes."

"Well, now, look here, Pierce. My father has agreed to my brother Dick's strong wish to be a medical, and he's coming up to the University next week. They want to know if he can lodge here and mess with you, and if you'll look after him a bit?"

"With all my heart, Mr. Gerry. We'll put him up to snuff!" And the speaker rubbed his hands complacently at the thought of "all the larks" they would tumble him into.

"Confound it!" cried Gerald, "that's just what I *don't* want you to do, my dear fellow. I mean, I want you to help him to keep out of all this filth which medical students, with bright exceptions, generally seem to plunge into, head over heels"

Pierce laughed a coarse laugh.

"Ah, it's all very well, excellent old Sawbones," answered Gerald,

"but you can't laugh me into believing that the way many of you fellows go on is either manly or gentlemanly."

"Well, if you want a saint to take care of him, Arlington, and keep him like an anchorite in cotton wool, don't send him here."

"Nonsense, I don't expect—" But Gerald was disappointed. Some further talk followed on the subject, and at length Pierce thus delivered himself:—

"Now look here, Arlington. I don't understand you a bit. You're no milk-sop. I've seen you, in a row, stand to your guns in style, when other fellows have blenched. But what are you talking such nonsense as this for? I'll tell you what it is. Either you have a cursedly bad opinion of us young body-cutters, much worse than we deserve, or else you've got notions about what young men generally should be, and should not be, fit only for a green girl at her mother's apron-strings."

"And you must let me tell you, Pierce, however great a fool you may think me, that young men are deucedly apt to forget how they ought to treat the sex to which their mothers and sisters belong——"

"Whew!"

"And that some day they may have wives and daughters of their own."

"Oh, hang it, we've nothing to do with wives, nor often with sweethearts, either, for that matter."

"In another sense than what you mean, it would be a good job if you all had, Pierce."

"But we can't! Pray, what chance have young fellows, without at least £500 a year, of getting any decent girl, or rather their mammas, to let us form an 'honourable attachment,' as you call it?"

"Well, and what's to hinder you from waiting till you've got an income? If a fellow doesn't *begin* walking in dirty ways, he won't find it so hard to keep out of them. Nor even when he has, need he stick to them. If he keeps a steady rein on himself as to his diet and his thoughts, goes in for cold bathing and exercise—and, above all, if he does lots of real hard work—with God's help and a strong will, he needn't be slave to his appetites, as any fellow who has ever trained for a boat-race or read for honours knows well enough. What in the name of Heaven," urged Gerald, "is the use of our being created men and not animals if we can't stick to some braver and nobler law than guides pigs and monkeys!"

"Nobler be d—d! Beg pardon, but I must follow nature—look

after number one, and devil take the hindmost! Besides," he continued, "there's something so d—d unmanly and maudlin in going on in the way you recommend!"

"Unmanly!" cried Gerald. "Well, now you *are* an—animal! I tell you this, friend Pierce, if you'll allow me to quote a fact, our grand old German fighting forefathers, the countrymen of Arminius, the fellows who were the first barbarians that ever fairly licked those plucky Romans, they had rather a different notion of what true manliness was. Just hand me that volume of Cæsar I see on your shelves up there. Isn't that his 'Commentaries?' Here listen to this—you did care a bit for the *Literæ Humaniores* once, I know:—

"*Qui diutissime impuberes permanserunt, maximum inter suos ferunt laudem; hoc ali staturam, ali vires, nervosque confirmari putant. Intra annum, vero, vigessimum fæminæ notitiam habuisse in turpissimis habent rebus.**

"Tacitus gives much the same account of them," continued Gerry, "just hand me that 'Germania.' Listen, old fellow:—*Sera juvenum Venus; eoque inexhausta pubertas; nec virgines festinantur; eadem juvena, similis proceritas, pares validæque miscentur; ac robora parentum liberi referunt.†*

"Sera"—"Diotissime," repeated Gerald, when he had finished. "Those who remain longest . . . most honoured. D'ye see? They thought it more *manly* to wait, and 'nobler.' And I say again, my boy, look at their pluck: remember, Pierce, these were the fellows who, with their descendants, conquered Roman, Celt, and Oriental, who now rule more than half the world; who, while giving woman her true place in social life, and so far curbing their mere animal passions, have made the words 'chivalry' and 'knightly honour' synonymous with all that is manliest, bravest, and noblest in the masculine genus. It is *not*," cried Arlington, smiting the table as he raised himself from the sofa, "It is *not* your debauchees, nor loose, dirty fellows that are honoured and loved in any age. It's men of clean, self-restrained, noble lives, Pierce, whom men respect."

* Cæsar. De Bello Gallico, Lib. vi., 21. "They, among their young people, are the most honoured who remain longest chaste and unmarried; by which abstinence they deem stature and strength are nourished, and the muscles invigorated. To indulge their passions, indeed, before their twentieth year is held to be most utterly disgraceful."

† Tac. Germania. Cap. xx. "Their young people come together late; and thus the strength of both sexes is preserved. They marry about the same age, are of nearly equal stature, and in the prime of life. Hence their children are as vigorous as the parents."

"Enough, enough, my valiant knight, I'm overpowered, regularly squelched. Of course you think it's only our horrid nasty ways of going on that make a fellow talk as we do."

"I don't say that, 'Esculapius,'" answered Gerald with a certain irresistible smile, well known to his friends. "I'm not setting up to jaw you like a clerical prig, so don't think it. All I say is, *obsta principiis*,* and don't call purity and self-control unmanly, for I swear there's no true manhood, nobleness, valour, and all the rest of it, without them, my beautiful doctor, that's all!"

"Perhaps you're right, Gerry," responded Pierce, demurely. "Can't say. But don't be hard on us, old boy. Just you try our life a bit, and you'll soon clutch at a straw to save your self-esteem."

"Thank you, Bobby, but if it's all the same to you, I better hadn't. Good-night, and thanks for all your kindness, old chap."

Arlington was right, no doubt. Thank Heaven for teaching men what true manhood is—whether they will always accept the teaching or not, and even though uncorrupted so-called barbarians understood it better than young dawdling civilized fops. Gerald Arlington's companion, and a good many more, so far as their sentiments and practice in this matter were concerned, might have been fitly caged in the Zoological Gardens. Yet Master Pierce, and hundreds of whom he is the representative man, would run any risks to save a fellow creature from drowning or fever, cholera, &c. He gave up his night's rest willingly, many a time, to attend some poor wretch in the Seven Dials or St. Giles', and exceedingly disapproved of the first step and greatest wrong in the history of a woman's ruin, though he didn't stop to ask where would be the supply for the market in which he and thousands like him think it no foul shame to deal, if there were no poor girls (chiefly among the unprotected working class, remember,) first seduced by some scoundrel or another. But all medical students, even in those days, were not like Pierce; and many are very different now.

Richard Arlington came up to the University in Gower Street, and did *not* lodge with Mr. Pierce, yet, nevertheless, was kindly noticed and even patronized by that gentleman, and duly cautioned against divers indiscretions, which forthwith poor Richard, however, was strongly inclined to commit, and when Mr. Pierce once found him returning with Hackett, from the Cyder Cellars about two o'clock in the morning, the said Richard received so severe a rebuke and such terrific warnings that henceforth he behaved exceedingly well for a fortnight. We may well say "*poor Richard!*"

* "Resist at first."

If we could sometimes see the end of those small beginnings we should, . . . well,—we should *not* begin. Write this quotation for thy phylactery, my brother of eighteen, “*Qui diutissime, &c.,*” but also especially and emphatically that other, “*Obsta principiis.*”

When Pierce told Hackett his conversation with Arlington, that refined young gentleman answered, “Ridiculous duffer! Why, what a mean-souled ass the fellow must be! I know I shall just please myself as often as I can. . . . There’s only one drawback you know, Pierce.” “I know,” nodded Pierce, pensively. “But, after all, don’t you see that may be for our good, you old scamp.” “What the d—l do you mean?” growled Hackett. “Why, help keep us out of the dirt,” replied his friend in a shame-faced way. “Gammon and bosh!” cried Hackett, with blustering indignation. “Well, it’s a bad business, anyhow,” quoth Pierce. “Come and let’s have a chop.” “Bad!” cried Hackett, as they went out at the hospital gates. “It’s a d——d shame that we can’t follow nature without” But we drop the curtain. It would be something to be thankful for if all great evils and sins could be abolished without exposure.

CHAPTER XIV.

HARRY had returned to Cambridge as soon as his friend was out of danger. He had been deeply touched with the incident of the ring, and not a little impressed with the Essay and with Professor ——’s opinion of it. Gerald and he met again at Christmas time, round a cheerful blaze at Neville Court, where Richard and Aunt Caroline were also amongst the guests. Cheerful, the party certainly was, but not merry (with the exception of Master Dick), and anxious forebodings in the minds of some, restless hopes, and fears in the hearts of others, would intrude unbidden.

“Oh, if Mr. Gerald Arlington would but enter the Church,” sighed Ellen Fortescue, as she and Miss Tylney were at work one morning during that foggy winter visit in the bay window heretofore described. “But I forgot. You won’t help him to that step. Why *are* there so many sects and divisions, dear?”

“Because the head divides—the *heart* unites—Nelly. And people care more for opinions than for love,” replied Miss Tylney.

"If men loved Christ more, they would be drawn to each other as servants of their common Saviour more powerfully than they could be kept apart by differences of doctrinal belief."

"Oh, Caroline, if all Christians could but see that! . . . (a pause). But why should not your nephew be a dissenting minister?"

"He was brought up to regard it rather as a vulgar calling, I fear, and I should blush to tell you both how much there is to justify that view, and how much some of the Dissenting laity do to make it so, by their treatment of their ministers."

"But, dear Carry, if a man really had the love of Christ in his heart, would such hindrances prevent him from serving his Lord? Would he not rejoice in taking part with his once crucified Saviour down even to the humblest depth of humiliation, if he might only thereby win souls to God? Do you remember that sketch of Ignatius Loyola we read last summer?"

"Nelly, every word you say is true. And I never saw so plainly as I did yesterday how little real depth of religious principle there is in that boy's soul."

"Not religious!" exclaimed Miss Fortescue. "Why I have heard Harry speak so very warmly of his friend's piety. There is a singularly beautiful passage on our power of loving God which your nephew wrote out for Harry from an 'Essay on Fenelon,' by Dr. Channing."

"I know it," answered Miss Tylney; "yes, he has much religious *sentiment*, but what I mean is that he has very little depth of religious *conviction*. I see almost everything else that is noble and beautiful there—but not that—not deep religious convictions. Oh! Nelly, Nelly, not that, God help him!" the foolish tears would come. "Besides, his father has almost a stronger repugnance to the idea of the ministry than to that of a literary life. And so there is nothing to be done, but reconcile him to a mercantile career."

But this was easier said than done. Of Gerald's sorrows and strifes in this matter, of the long struggle against his fate and his efforts to obey his father and yet to follow the bent of his own genius, very little can be said in these pages, though a time and place may occur fitting for their narration.

When Harry and Gerald met at Neville Court this winter, after Harry's experiences in love-making on the shores of Windermere, and Gerald's illness, they were naturally rather morose. Miss Tylney, at the request of Mr. Arlington, had been explaining to her nephew the utter impossibility of his father's supporting him while he sought to prepare himself at home by study for the career he had so ardently desired. He was about as miserable as could

be well conceived—for duty seemed to be pulling him in different directions, and, as he observed to Harry, “that was about the worst pain a fellow could suffer from, as far as he knew.”

But he turned from his own troubles, after a long silence, to cheer up his friend.

“Well, you, at all events, are a trump,” remarked Harry, in reply, holding out his hand to Arlington. “But when fellows really are thoroughly unhappy, I don’t see that there’s any good in blinking it, or pretending to be jolly. We’ll stand up to our work and our fate like bricks, old Gerry boy, but we needn’t *dance* over the graves of our hopes——” and his voice quivered so that he thought he had better stop.

“God bless you, Harry,” answered Gerry, at length. “While we can help one another it is only half as bad as——. I wish I *could* help you.” Then a long pause, broken at length by Gerald’s asking Fortescue, “Have you been reading hard at Cambridge?”

“Yes, but I don’t find much good in it. But I’ll tell you what, Gerry, Providence has been merciful to me; and by way of encouragement, for trying to be a good boy, I have had *such* a refresher in London.”

“Glad of it.—As how?”

“You know, I spent a few days at my uncle’s in Wimpole Street. Well, I found out Jammy Pierce, and, by George! we’ve been round to half the hospitals in London. Been to clinical lectures, and to operations, and dissecting-rooms. Oh, it’s grand, Gerry, grand.”

“Always said you should be a doctor.”

“Ah! if I *could* be!” cried Harry with a despairing enthusiasm.

There’s something, to my mind, so wonderfully noble, so chivalrous, so infernally *courageous* in the way these huge establishments, and the gallant fellows who serve in them, stand up against the big armies of Disease and Pain. Yes, I’d give something to enlist in *that* army. I saw an operation for fungoid tumour at St. Thomas’; and the cool, scientific way in which that great knife, Green, relieved the poor wretch, as utterly unmoved by the lad’s cries as Wellington at Waterloo, calmly determined to confer upon him the greatest blessing man could then give him.—Faith, it would have done your heart good to see it.”

“Precious glad I didn’t!”

“And then those young rascals, the pupils, all hanging over the rails of the operating-room to see the operation, laughing and jawing all the time. I should have said it was an abominable shame, for it made my blood boil (when it got so bad that Mr. Green stopped his cutting, and quietly rowed them),—only, I felt intense admira-

tion for this perfect coolness among them all, and indifference to mere pain. It is a great victory, Gerry, oh! a *great* victory, when men can be indifferent to pain, and treat it as no evil, but go right forward to cut away the real evil of which pain is only the symptom."

"I suppose then, God is operating upon us now, for some good purpose. He seems to be cutting our hearts out; though, perhaps, it's a mere fungoid tumour, as you call it, after all."

"Yes, I often thought in the midst of my own misery, how I had preached to you, and I believe it was the thought of that, and some memory of my poor father's words, and the haunting idea that he might be looking down upon me, kept me from some desperate step. And now, see, just three or four days in London opens up quite a new and blessed prospect, a sphere where calm beneficent power, manly courage and wisdom, are fighting out victoriously a stern and mighty battle. Yes, Heaven will help us."

"I believe it," said Gerald reverently; "and we *will* be true to one another, or we'll 'know the reason why!'"

Next day they had a capital run with some neighbouring beagles, and the day after, Harry shot three brace of birds, and Gerry picked them up (he never affected shooting himself, and declared it was "slow"); but altogether they rose into a healthy, even slightly cheerful, state of mind.

Oh Youth! blessed, buoyant youth!

Then Harry went to town, and bought books on Pathology, and went back to Cambridge, wiser, sadder, yet stronger, and, in certain respects, far more at peace than when he first enrolled himself a member of that ancient University. Then the frost came, and he took diligently to skating, and in time, to boating again, with a hearty good will, and was made stroke-oar of his boat, and read medically with the ardour of first love.

Gerald, having with his parents got back to Hartland, meanwhile, re-trod the Custom House and the Docks, gave up all his studies, and actually won over Mr. Bramble, by his fierce devotion to business; mastered even the "Waste Book" (Mr. Grant had gone into the Australian trade), and never gave another captain cause of complaint. But then he learned Schiller's "Die Idealen," by heart in the evenings, and in secret loved Byron's "Manfred" and "Childe Harold" more passionately than ever—aye, loved them more than even in the days of his first draughts from that sorcerer's cup, for in the sorcerer's own unhallowed words—

"Great is their love, who love in guilt and fear."

CHAPTER XV.

SIX months rolled away. Harry Fortescue worked on bravely at his medical researches, and Gerald Arlington at his labours in the City. But both men were deteriorating in more ways than one, though gaining immensely in resolute strength of will, and so far in real manliness of character. Then Mr. Arlington, with the kindest words Gerald had ever had from him, gave his son a cheque for £30, and told him to take a month's run in the Highlands. Gerald did so, and for that time lived in a world of dazzling blessedness, never to be forgotten. The glories and the raptures of that first vision of the "land of the mountain and the flood," as he wandered on, day after day, can be better imagined than described. But there were deeper thoughts and joys in his soul, nourished amid those mountains and lakes, than any of a merely landscape painter's paradise. He had Goethe's "Dichtung und Wahrheit," in his knapsack, and Carlyle's "Life of Schiller" in his heart, and he returned to London resolved that thenceforth, for him also, as for Goethe, "Fiction must be the life of his soul;" and that, like Schiller, he would burst the walls of his dungeon by a tragedy, which was already taking form in his imagination, and which, in due course, should take the world by storm.

Weeks and months rolled on. The dark and gloomy days of November were once again oppressing the spirits of His Majesty's London lieges. The aristocracy of the *north* side of Oxford Street were settling in for the winter. By-the-bye, what is fashion? Bulwer Lytton said, forty years ago, the north side of Oxford Street was as much looked down upon by the south side, as Russell Square, Tavistock Square, Gower Street, and all that "terra incog.," are by the region stretching from Portland Place to Bryanston Square. *Mais nous avons changé tout cela.*

Well, the visit of a distinguished foreigner to London, with letters of introduction to Mr. Featherstone and Mr. Arlington, among other "City dons," involved, even at that very early period of the winter season, a magnificent entertainment at the house of the former in Portland Place. But the hours were more rational then. Six o'clock—Leila was just released from the hands of the lady's-maid, and was in a slight flutter at the prospect before her. It was her first grand dinner-party. She peeped into her sister's room, partly to see if she could be of any use, and partly to gather information. For *that* young lady (Miss Adelaide) a professor in the

art of *coiffures* had been specially retained, and he had not yet completed his design. So Leila sat as meekly as she could till he had retired, and then cautiously enquired concerning the expected guests. Among others whom Adelaide condescended to name in reply to Leila's dissatisfied and repeated "Nobody else?" was, "That square built oddity, Gerry Arlington," for whom she (*i.e.*, Adelaide) felt an irreverent mixture of antipathy and interest.

But Leila answered thoughtfully—

"Oh! I'm glad *he's* coming. There'll be somebody, at all events, I can speak to."

"You don't know that, Miss Pussy," replied Adelaide, with severe dignity. "I suppose you won't talk to him unless he talks to you? Perhaps he'll be occupied with me."

"But he always does talk to me," retorted Leila, with a curious mixture of shyness and pride. "And what is more, *ma belle sœur*, he talks to me as if I were a reasonable being—which you don't—and almost all other young gentlemen that come here, if they notice me at all, treat me with a kind of ridiculous condescending *empressement*, which I suppose is meant to be very engaging and polite, as unto a creature dressed like a woman, and without a soul."

"You are dreadfully fierce about it, my dear. But, come along; it is time we were in the drawing-room. I wish you joy of your beau."

"Does my hair do? Does the dress set well?"

"No, of course not; it never does." (Indignant aside from Leila—"Oh, you Cross-patch!") "Now, Martha, quick!—my satin shoes. Don't be all night. Pearl-brooch. Quick! Oh, mercy! there's a double knock!" and away they flew to the large, well-lighted suite of drawing-rooms, where their father and mother already sat in state.

A London dinner-party, during the month of November, in the dreary wilds of Portland Place! "What possible interest can attach to such a common-place, prosaic piece of stuffing and gossiping?" Nevertheless, it is in just these common-place scenes that life's deepest poetry, of course, will often be found. Perhaps it is the contrast of the prosy outward circumstances with the passionate romance that is heaving beneath them, which creates so touching a picture. Many a tragic drama is going on every day in cabs or omnibuses, at street corners, and in garrets, as well as on opera-boards and in *salons*. But however dull and stupid the rest of the party in Portland Place may have been, there were two young hearts there that night circling round each other in strange celestial dance to music of the spheres—as we suppose our Carlyle

would have it—drawn together by sweet, mysterious attraction: two eternities waiting, perhaps, to be moulded by the influences of that evening's party. Adelaide had been put into supreme good humour by the marked pleasure with which one of the guests—an agreeable, only son of a rich county baronet—had greeted and conversed with her, after the interval that had elapsed since sundry promenades last summer at Hastings. Hence, she contrived to do a little benevolence by giving her sister to Gerald Arlington to hand down to dinner. And so, while the distinguished foreigner talked with Mr. Featherstone, and Mr. Arlington, Senr., with a young Lord of the Admiralty (only son of a peer) and the baronet about railways, reform bills, and the progress of Russia—while a dozen other voices buzzed and chattered around them—while servants moved rapidly to and fro, and champagne was handed, and silver plate flashed, and course after course appeared and vanished—Leila and Gerald glided off on a quiet little cruise of conversation by themselves—sailed away under sunny skies into regions of poetry and art, where they were not likely to be disturbed. A very beautiful cruise it seemed to both of them—certainly very different from the ordinary tenor of their lives. Yet, strange to say, their talk *was* at length suspended, for opposite to them sat an artist of no mean celebrity, who had kindly shown Alfred Featherstone some attention, and who occasionally deigned to honour with his presence the circle in Portland Place. He was speaking of Alfred, who was then again at Cambridge, and that was sufficient to rivet Leila's attention. He praised her brother's abilities, and lamented the said brother's want of determination to overcome the difficulties of a thorough art-training. He referred with special delight to a masterly sketch by him, which he had lately seen, of one of the old Norse heroes returning from battle. Leila's dark eyes glistened so brightly, while her heart beat high with gladness, that the artist glanced at her admiringly as he observed, "I think, Miss Leila, you seem to know something about that sketch."

And Gerald felt just a trifle jealous. But soon the dangerous and delightful man went off into remarks upon art generally, and Gerald's whole soul was listening. Yet before long, to Leila's silent wonder and enjoyment, Gerald himself was taking part in the conversation, and the artist was listening and replying with considerable interest. Gradually the rest of their half of the table were listening too, and Leila slightly trembled at the awful position her charming companion had got into, and then her colour rose to hear what he said and how he said it, and she did so long for

Alfred to hear it all, until she dropped from her shining heavens, as she found the ladies rising from table, and herself back in the dull world again of common prose, retiring with eight or ten respectable ladies, young and old, to the drawing-room. There they sat, discussing the weather and their mutual acquaintances, their servants, &c., in the most amiable style of the newest common-places for—what seemed to Leila—an interminable time.

Long before the usual period had elapsed, she caught herself looking each time the drawing-room door opened to see if the gentlemen were coming up. She could not at all understand the interest with which she was wondering whether young Mr. Arlington would come and talk to her again, and whether he would be asked to sing, or whether he would be more attracted by other young ladies and gentlemen in the room. She had been accustomed to think of him as a wonderful genius, full of poetry and song, of passion and romance, but still she knew that he had been described by her father and other prosaic people as “a weak young man,” and she hated and despised weak young men with all her heart. But that evening he had seemed so calm and strong, for in truth he *was* full of new life, strength, and hope, all drawn from his discoveries about fiction, and his labours at the “Dramatic Romance.” Hence he seemed to her so calm, and therefore so different from what he used to be, and yet full of that enthusiasm which she had heard her “circle,” especially Harry and Alfred, speak of, but which had only once before burst forth to her, viz., when they sat together among the myrtles, at the ever-to-be-remembered dance.

Meantime Gerald himself was fuming away downstairs, as he passed the decanters, longing to escape to the drawing room ; for the artist had plunged *con amore* into the railway subject with Mr. Arlington and the Russian Baron, and there was no more talk to be had with him. So when he heard the arrival of a few more guests for the evening party, Gerald incontinently took to his heels and joined the ladies.

Handsome old ladies, graceful young ones, all dressed to advantage—grouped, of course, in highly picturesque attitudes. But Gerald’s eyes were not resting on them. He was furtively glancing at the one sylph-like form in white, that pale-faced girl, with the large, roving eyes, and the dark hair, in which a red camellia bud was twined—whose countenance expressed latent passion, blended with an indescribable mixture of sweetness and cynicism, love, and tartness, all in one, and in whose movements were a curious yet bewitching combination of subdued energy and

restless shyness with maidenly grace. No wonder his susceptible heart beat rapidly as he thought he saw those eyes glancing towards him, away from the lady to whom she was talking, and then half a movement, as if to offer him some tea. So when the gentlemen came up, and screened the maiden and himself from observation, he drew nigh; and then, as she was a daughter of the house, it was only proper, after he had accepted the tea, that she should show him a little attention, and timidly invite him to look at some prints; and then he could do no less than gradually draw her on into the small further drawing-room (where those beautiful and well-remembered shrubs were grouped), by asking her to explain other pictures hanging there.

And so once again "among the myrtles" they sat down on an ottoman, and stepped into their little fairy bark again, and glided away together "over the moonlit sea."

Adelaide was too happy with her baronet's only son, and her mother too busy at cards, and the rest of the company all too well occupied or too polite to disturb them, and besides, they were about the most insignificant people in the room! So the evening sped on, and at length music came at intervals.

Then Gerald Arlington—feeling that he played on the beautiful young soul beside him, as the musician on the keys—found that it answered to his touch with its exquisite sympathies, and that he had met with one, who to all her other marvellous charms added this crowning one of all—that she liked to listen to him—rejoiced in what he enjoyed—lived in his noblest life—lived, to use her own words, "so that she seemed never to have lived before." No wonder that Gerald felt also that something of which he had long dreamed and passionately craved for—some divine vision of beauty and bliss that had haunted him for years—was being actually unveiled. He saw the bright light coming from behind the cloud, and felt that a far brighter glory was perhaps awaiting him. Yes—a divine Radiance—might it not soon be revealed?

Lèila, after a fearful glance at her mother and Adelaide through the long vista of rooms and people, gave herself up to the enchantment of the hour, and thought for a moment that all she had heard about a ruined world and total depravity was a lie, and that earth *was* beautiful, and that God and heaven were very near.

"Oh!" she exclaimed once, after Gerald had been describing a life consecrated to making the world beautiful by Art and Fiction, Poetry and Song, and thereby filling many hearts with thoughts of "all things lovely and of good report"—"oh! if only I knew what was really right—what one *ought* to do—I would so gladly spend

my life in doing it! But it seems to me sometimes all so confused. I think God meant us to be happy—else I would determine to do without happiness. But do you not know, Mr. Arlington, what it is to go on, day after day, trying to do all your work rightly—trying to conquer all bad feelings—and yet all the time to feel so—so sorrowful?”

“Do I *not* know it?” exclaimed Gerald, fervently.

“And yet,” continued Leila, “one seems every now and then to have a glimpse of a brighter, happier life——” (Her voice trembled.)

“Yes, and a *truer* life!” exclaimed her companion. And he looked into her sad face with a passionate, wistful gaze, as if he longed with infinite desire to lift her up and bear her far away to that diviner sphere.

“Oh, Miss Featherstone, a truer life, because one more truly in harmony with all God’s purposes. There *is* such a life to be lived even on earth. I have so ardently craved and prayed for it. I know we are intended to live that life in spite of all the petty cares and mean drudgery of existence, and we *can* help men to live it.”

“But this drudgery, surely, is honourable,” said Leila, after a pause. “Doing one’s Duty under all circumstances is noble.”

“Very noble. But what *is* one’s Duty? I say that we must live to make life in harmony with the Divine life, and that is very, very different from the ordinary existence men choose to submit to.”

“Have we any choice but submission? I put my neck under the yoke of conscience, but, indeed, it is sometimes so hard and heavy to bear.”

And as she looked at him with a sorrowful smile the foolish boy thought of an angel which had lost its way and forgotten how to return to heaven.

“We have a choice permitted us,” exclaimed Gerald, impetuously. “Everything is granted to the resolute will seeking for the Beautiful and True. And all these hindrances are only phantoms that yield to our determined striving——”

How he longed to add “dear Leila,” but he dared not. So he hurried on with impassioned fervour—

“You can, you will, find this diviner life in ART, in the love of all things Beautiful—in working to reproduce them for the elevation and blessing of those around you. This is the life, the *nature*, of God. This raises us above all the wretched cares and poor desires of common life—above the foolish and angry strifes of existence—above the gains and covetousness of a mere business career. It

allies one with the ideal and yet most real beings whom the ancient Greeks feigned to reside in every grove and stream, but allies us with them most of all in their divine serenity on Mount Olympus, with the glorious spirits of men who carved the Apollo Belvidere and the Juno Ludovisi, and their glorious Diana—with the men who wrote the ‘Phædon’ and ‘Iphigenia,’ ‘Comus’ and ‘Wallenstein,’ ‘Childe Harold’ and ‘Faust.’ Oh! never doubt, this *is* what we are created for. Music, harmony, love.”

Abashed, at length he paused. Leila glanced at him, and her eye fell before his gaze. It was very sweet and pleasant.

“I cannot tell you,” she murmured, after a moment’s shy hesitation, “the blessing it is to me to hear you talk like this—though I know many there—(looking at the company)—would laugh at us and call it all moonshine and madness. I have heard only such different views of life *preached*, Sundays as well as week-days. My parents—our governess—are high Calvinists. And surely even the world says ‘nay’ to most of what you are urging.”

“The world fights against us,” answered Gerald, with kindling eye, “as do the cravings of the bodily life; and true artist-workers must often lay aside the pencil, the chisel, or the pen, to repel its attacks or perform its behests—but we grow stronger and braver day by day—and at length command both the world and ourselves.”

Arlington’s face glowed with conscious power and pride; but his voice soon fell into softer tones as he bent his head nearer to his companion’s face. “Herein, I think, is solved the terrible riddle we have both been tortured by. For do we not see how obedience to Duty, to Conscience, is thus harmonized with obedience to our divine instincts that crave for Beauty, Love, and Harmony? It *is* our highest duty to others, and ourselves, thus to fill their and our own life with what things soever are true and lovely, bright and pure. Let me read you this passage from Schiller’s ‘Letters on Æsthetic Culture,” he continued, drawing a memorandum-book from his pocket. “He has been speaking of the power of beauty over the soul, and how it helps to bring us into that condition which he calls ‘Play,’ *i.e.*, perfect freedom from labour, compulsion, anxiety, and fear—that state which alone is the perfect development of humanity, the true end and aim of life. ‘This principle,’ he says, ‘is only startling in science; it long ago lived and worked in the art and the feeling of the Greeks, as their most honoured master; but they transplanted to Olympus what should have flourished upon earth. Guided by truth itself, they caused both

the seriousness and the toil which furrow the cheeks of mortals, and the vain pleasure which smooths the vacant countenance, to disappear from the forehead of the celestials—they freed the ever-happy from the fetters of all motive, all duty, all care, and made indolence and indifference the enviable lot of divinity.” (Leila started, but resumed her delighted gaze as Gerald hastened to explain.) “He merely means the absence of *effort* and *anxiety*, as he shows by the next words—‘Divinity, which is merely a human name for the freest and noblest existence.’ He describes how in this state, under the influence of beauty and love, men’s wills and inclinations blend in perfect harmony with the divine laws; so that there is no strife, no struggling, or unsatisfied longing. He speaks of a glorious Grecian statue of Juno, full of feminine, most attractive loveliness, yet, at the same time, possessed by a spirit of divine self-sufficing dignity and peace. ‘Irresistibly seized and attracted,’ he says, ‘by the graciousness, yet repelled by the self-sufficiency, we find ourselves at the same time in a condition of the highest peace and the highest emotion; and there results that wonderful feeling for which the intellect has no conception and language no name.’”

Leila heaved a profound sigh of mingled delight and mystified wonder, and as she and Gerald looked at each other, they found themselves beginning a quiet, delicious little laugh; but Gerald hastened on—

“Yes, it *is* queer; but—you seem to like it,” he added, with an inquiring smile. No answer. A momentary pause. A downcast look and a blush on the maiden’s face. Then looking up with a playful smile that was half a sigh, she said,

“Ah—yes—that is,—I do like your being so romantic.”

Encouragement enough for Gerald again to glide swiftly on—

“Then, dear Miss Featherstone, let me ask you to see how another writer brings out what I feel, and want *you* to feel, is the grand lesson we all have to learn. ‘The holy work of Beauty,’ he says, ‘is not limited merely to its attractive power. It does not aid in our reconciliation to God by simply leading us to obey the divine will with joy’ (which the writer has been showing is one of its greatest functions); ‘it also exerts a direct influence on our souls, which, of itself, tends, with deep mysterious power, to place us in harmony with God. In proportion as we feel the influence of Beauty entirely occupying our souls, we are in heaven, dwelling in God and God in us. At such times we feel no compulsion, no passion, no sin—all is serene peace and sublime joy.’”

What wonder if Leila Featherstone listened that evening, as she

had never listened to mortal voice before—certainly not from the pulpit; no, nor even in the concert-room. Gerald's words came to her oppressed spirit like an evangel, lifting off the heavy compulsion of conscience—the stern yoke she had partly accepted from others, partly sought for herself—delivering her from the galling burden of that atmosphere of intense worldliness, mingled with a hard, gloomy religion in which she had been nurtured. But those words, also, came to her with such mighty power, because of the unutterable happiness of sympathy—of finding a pure, ardent nature that cared to say all this to her—one who thought her worth his sharing with her the thoughts of his romantic, pure, and poetic nature; and who said it all with such tender interest in her difficulties and sorrows. This unwonted happiness and blessed consciousness of being understood and cared for wrought like a spring of new life to poor Lilybell, exorcised every trace of “uncanniness” and evil temper, and at length gave a playfulness to her manner which was inexpressibly fascinating; while the very depth and intensity of the admiration her lover had begun to feel for her, had soon driven out the mocking spirit of worldliness which (however subdued by his nobler nature) was ever latent in his soul as a reaction, perhaps, from his vehement and impatient enthusiasm. And then the charm, to Gerald, of the ravishing contrast between the coarse, worldly, or antagonistic element in which he was usually immersed, and the sweet enthusiasm of this young girl, with her shy glances and repressed playfulness and pure far-reaching aspirations—so different, too, from the mere softness or empty-headed frivolity of most other young ladies he met with. No wonder they both looked so marvelously happy and picturesque, that the artist's eye, as he leaned against the folding-doors of the larger room, lingered involuntarily, though furtively, more than once on the singular loveliness of the maiden's usually pale face, flushed as it was now with excitement, or that it rested for an instant on Gerald's handsome, animated countenance, which told so plainly the “old, old tale;” no wonder that, then, he turned to a friend and murmured, “Eden is not lost for all of us—yet.”

So the hand of the ormolu clock on the mantelpiece moved from half-past nine to ten and then towards another half hour. And still they talked on and on. And Leila gradually unburdened her mind of many a weary care and haunting trouble by speaking in generalities and putting suppositious cases. For your shy people, when once the ice is broken and the sweet relief of sympathy comes at last, are often carried into great frankness, and she felt a wonderful confidence in the soul that was speaking, alike

through the lips and the clear depths of the eyes that glowed upon her. Then there rose up and floated on through the hushed crowd the thrilling tones of Adelaide's superb voice. This was all that was wanting to fill to the brim Gerald's bliss. He sat entranced. But on Leila's countenance a shadow had fallen. Perhaps she was thinking how little (for her sister went to concerts and operas innumerable) Art had done to make Adelaide what her own hungering heart and loyal reverent nature sought for in an elder sister. Then, again, she could not help fearing, with a cold chill, that, although her brother was certainly in his best and purest state of mind when absorbed in his artistic pursuits, most like what she loved and longed to see him always, yet that Art was doing little to make him either a really noble character, or to give to him, any more than to her sister, peace. But these mournful doubts fled as she heard Gerald's low earnest tones, in that silvery voice of his, once again, and saw him pointing her attention to the faces of some of the guests as Adelaide began another exquisite song.

"See,"—he whispered—"see how, when people are really under the influence of the Beautiful, their souls are purified and at rest. Look at their faces. Whatever love and purity, whatever worth and nobleness is in them, seems then called forth. They are ennobled, refined, and placed in harmony with the universe."

When Gerald was quoting that passage from Schiller's "Letters" he was tempted to quote another and far more beautiful passage, bearing a wonderful similarity to this—written by a man who had probably never seen those "Letters." It was a passage from Dr. Channing's "Essay on Fencelon," describing the two kinds of peace known on earth, but the second being the very breath of heaven. Yet dear as those words of the great American had once been to Gerald in their highest meaning, as describing the peace of religion, he knew that this was not the sense in which he valued them now. Had he quoted them that night to Leila Featherstone it would have been in support of his impassioned pleading for the divine influences of Art, not of Religion; and yet he felt, somehow, that this would have been slightly lowering their glorious meaning. So he let them pass.

When the song had ceased he continued thus: "Do you know these lines of Wordsworth in the 'Excursion,' Book IX., beginning 'And 'tis known?'"

"No; mamma has not encouraged us to read much poetry. I wish she would. Adelaide would have liked it once, but she does

not care for it now. But I do know Wordsworth's 'Lines on Tintern Abbey,' and I sometimes think if people felt oftener what he describes it would be better for us all. Can you tell me what he says in the passage you spoke of?"

With almost as much bashfulness as his companion was manifesting, Gerald began repeating—

"And 'tis known
That when we stand upon our native soil,
Unelbowed by such objects as oppress
Our active powers, those powers themselves become
Strong to subvert our noxious qualities :
They sweep distemper from the busy day,
And make the chalice of the big round year
Run o'er with gladness ; whence the being moves
In beauty through the world, and all who see
Bless him, rejoicing in his neighbourhood."

"EXCURSION," BOOK IX.

"Oh! how beautiful," murmured Leila, with another sigh of infinite relief and thankfulness; timidly adding, "Will you mark the place for me in my Wordsworth? Miss Fortescue has given it to me."

"I shall be so glad."

"And yet," quoth Leila, with a pensive and rather dubious after-thought, "his words sound, as if he thought we could do everything for ourselves."

"And so we can!" exclaimed Gerald, with enthusiasm. "All things are possible, if only—we are true to ourselves. And, Lady Leila," he continued, as she rose and he took her hand, "will you—will you let me send you an extract from that work by my favourite Schiller? His 'Letters on Æsthetic Culture.' (What I quoted from a little while ago. You must read them.) And shall we often think"—he had kept this word for the last: he saw they must at length leave their Paradisaical little nook, for people were beginning to move off, and his father and mother were looking about for him—"shall we often think of what we can do to beautify life, and try to do this as our rightful *duty*? And shall we not, after doing the needful work that the world thrusts upon us, return swiftly to the higher task that shall bring to those we love—and perhaps to those who love not us—far greater blessings than anything else on earth? Coming, mother. Good night, Miss Featherstone."

One farewell glance, one pressure of the hand, and they had passed from the starry world above into the dull, actual world below. But the glow of Eden was on them both for many a day. Not the sheen of the fiery sword; no, surely not. They were sent

forth from the Garden not because they had sinned. . . . Yet—but we must not anticipate.

And Leila (whatever might hereafter be in store for her), when she reached her own little room, flung herself on her knees by her bedside, and thanked God that He had at length granted her to meet with an understanding, sympathising friend. And she fell asleep that night thinking of all she could do to help Alfred with noble subjects for his pencil, and by writing illustrations for them, and by “æsthetic letters” help to keep him up to live the diviner life. She awoke the next morning with a feeling that her former troubled life had passed away, that heaven had indeed begun for her on earth, and that all which before she had so often passionately longed to do, but which seemed as a forbidden joy, to be snatched only by stealth and with a guilty conscience, was now rising before her as a holy duty, and “a joy for ever.”

And Gerald figured in her vision as a bright and conquering youth, Perseus-like, winged and armed in brilliant panoply, delivering her, the poor chained Andromeda, from her rock. “Then,” says the sentimental reader, “surely that meeting was indeed one of those glorious moments in two young lives when a youth and maiden first find their true blessedness in mutual, holy, fervent love, when two answering souls, as the English prophet says, first rush together in glowing lambent flame to heaven.” Alas, not so, too sanguine and sentimental reader. As days stole on, if any discerning friends of the youth had cared to inquire into the state of Leila Featherstone’s heart, they would have had much reason to doubt whether she was really in love with Gerald Arlington at all. It would have been pretty evident that she thought more of what had been said to her that night than of him who said it. It was upon working with and for Alfred that her mind seemed continually dwelling, rather than engaged in snatching brief tender glimpses of future bliss in Gerald’s company. She felt profoundly grateful to young Mr. Arlington—felt he was a friend whom she longed to keep a friend for ever; but she was not in love with him. No, reports our discerning friend, decidedly not in love. Yet, as usual in such cases, her feelings underwent strange alternations—almost fierce revulsions. Sometimes she felt drawn towards the young poet with irresistible tenderness, and then filled with a wild scorn for the “dreamy, weak enthusiast.”

Had she, indeed, cared to analyze such subtle and complicated feelings (which, thank Heaven, she did not, and was far too simple-minded and maidenly to do) she would perhaps have been conscious that she was much more really in love with Harry

Fortescue than with Gerald Arlington. The former had been the preserver of her beloved brother's life. He had first won her romantic admiration, touched her girlish fancy, and the more, because he had deeply loved and been cruelly used by her sister. Had not that same girlish fancy been pre-occupied, probably she might have tumbled fathoms deep in love with her fascinating, silver-tongued, poetic Perseus; for her romantic intellect, and especially her conscience, which ruled supreme in her soul, were satisfied with him. He seemed to be the complement of her intellectual and moral being. But Mr. Fortescue, though he had scarcely spoken two consecutive sentences to her in his life—ah, well, how can one describe the indescribable? The upshot of the whole rigmarole, we take it, however, was that Leila Featherstone was not then actually in love with either of our heroes. She was one of those shy, proud, and dainty maidens who take a deal of wooing to be in love with anybody. But then, when once they really are in love—ah! then—there is an avalanche!

Far otherwise was it with Gerald. Through the long ride home that dark night with his parents he was surrounded with a blaze of light. He had found all he had long believed in, dreamed of, yet scarce believed he could ever discover. Yes—the bright orb of a true and passionate love had at length glided from behind the cloud, and bathed his whole being in its radiance. He at least seemed to have found the completion not of his intellectual and moral life alone, but of his whole existence. For even while he was guiding Leila into regions of beauty and peace which she had never entered before—while he was thus undoing some of her heaviest burthens, he continually felt that there was something in *her* soul and life higher than in his own—felt that if she ever cared for him as he did for her, she would inspire, raise, and lead him “upwards and onwards,” as God meant every true woman to do to the man who loves her with loyal and undivided love. And Gerald Arlington was right in thinking of her thus. Wrong only in presumptuously believing, alack! that he satisfied her imagination as she did his own. He might well be deceived. He was too young to know much of the mysteries of a young girl's heart, and not sufficiently humble or diffident to distrust appearances in his favour. Though naturally one of the humblest-minded fellows that ever breathed, he could not be quite unconscious of the spell which he never failed to exercise over his young acquaintances and friends, especially of the fairer sex. So in this case he hoped with great hope—indeed with scarcely a doubt. There are few things more paradoxical than the presumptuous

conceit with which young men often fancy they have won a girl's affections, when perhaps they have done little more than excite her interest or just touch her fancy; while, by a strange paradox, the very same men find it the hardest thing in the world to realize the fact of their passion being at length actually, devotedly, passionately returned.

CHAPTER XVI.

STRANGELY different things happen at the same moment to dear and distant friends. If they only each knew how the other is circumstanced! But Heaven mercifully hides it.

Now it so happened that, on the same night on which the banquet in Portland Place (described in the last chapter) was held, Alfred Featherstone, seeing that it certainly wouldn't do to run down to "the paternal spread," determined to do the thing in style at the same time in his own rooms at Cambridge. Several jolly good fellows were gathered round his hospitable board. He was essentially of a generous nature in his way. So few things pleased him better than giving a posse of men what they described as "a splendid feed and lots of tippie." Harry Fortescue himself was in high spirits on the occasion by a natural reaction from the gloom that now often oppressed him when he was alone. At dinner the famous ale, as usual, was in great request, and after dinner the punch flowed fast, and the talk and the songs, the wit and the stories, were exceedingly high-flavoured and racy. Even men of steady footing were gradually swept off their equilibrium, morally not physically. The latter would not take place till the small hours with any but a very raw hand here and there. Then came cards; and coffee for the few "who liked slops." And the songs and jokes became coarser, and mirth waxed fast and furious, till Alfred declared privately it was getting "a little too smutty," and proposed leap-frog on the sacred grass in defiance of deans, proctors, and all other dons into the bargain. Fortescue, however, contrived to save his friend from that scrape by enticing him to a walk in Trinity Street. Having dined at 4 p.m., they had ample time to get out of the gates before the prescribed hour, and walked rapidly along enjoying the cool breeze

after the close, reeking odours of the gownsman's rooms. But the fresh air produced the effect usual in such cases, and both the young men rose into a state of Bacchanalian enthusiasm not quite consistent with proctorial notions of the dignity of their gowns. So they thought it prudent, after a sudden and cheery view-halloo and the commencement of an inspiring drinking-song, to dodge down a dark alley and scamper across a certain "Piece," and then along a well-known street, with which Alfred, however, was better acquainted than Harry—a direction in which the former had often before tried in vain to draw his friend. So on they went in reckless spirits and exuberant merriment . . . and then into deeper darkness. . . . But again we say, let the curtain drop. . . . It is a funeral pall—for "the wages of sin is death." And when a young, immortal soul first goes down into the pit of deadly sin some place in heaven may be vacant, and an angel have left it to go out and weep bitterly.

* * * * *

One dark night, soon after that last referred to, two young gownsmen might have been seen dodging the proctors in the town a little while, and then darting off again in the direction of Barnwell—the very name of which, to one of them, in the first year of his college life, was like the hiss of a serpent in his ear. This happened for several subsequent evenings at short intervals. Though there were a good many others doing the same thing, the two here specified may easily be recognized. Fortescue was going the old ways of "the Beast," under the influence of Featherstone and of his own uncontrolled passions—going down into the ghastly pit where so many of the brightest and noblest have buried their souls' life in this world for ever. He did not—could not—go without occasional terrible struggles and remorse. A nature like his, so trained to early purity and filial love, could not break loose at last from all he had once held sacred—however gradual the disruption might have been—without fearful conflicts. But having once lost his hold on a Higher Being, and flung from him the holy treasure of manly purity, he was weakened for every subsequent assault, and felt utterly reckless—at once unwilling and unable to control himself in spite of the wretchedness and self-reproach which alternated with his frenzied joy.

Coming back one murky night with Featherstone—a legion of miserable, remorseful thoughts in his heart—his companion suddenly pressed his arm and quietly asked him if he didn't see a couple of fellows a little a-head of them.

"Don't speak loud," added he, drawing a life-preserver from his pocket, "but keep your weather-eye open. And, I say,—By the

living Jingo, there are two more behind us! We shall have to run for it, Harry. Have you only got that walking-stick? I told you always to bring a thing like this."

"I wouldn't give much for a fellow's chance," replied Harry, sulkily, "who felt my stick on his skull. But are they bullies, think you?"

"Of course, Barnwell bullies, come for tin, waiting to make gownsmen fork out, under a penalty of a frightful thrashing."

"Oh, aye, I know all about that—curse the blackguards. They know we daren't prosecute."

"Three of 'em hit a little too hard, though, five years ago—nearly killed their man—got lagged—fourteen years. They're ugly devils."

"Pooh! we'll diddle 'em fast enough. I've never run from an enemy yet, Master Freddy, and I'm not going to begin now."

"Then we must cash up, and I haven't a brass farthing left."

"Nor I. Why, you don't think I'd bribe the brutes? What a cowardly beggar you are, Featherstone."

"Go to h—ll with you, for an uncourteous varmint, Fortescue! I'll fight at the right time as fast as any fellow, but not two against four—and in such a cause!"

Ah! that was what (in spite of his fierce words) Fortescue knew was taking all the pluck out of him. For the first time in his life he felt the cold chill of fear creeping through his heart—unnerving his arm, and almost making his knees knock together.

"Here they come," whispered Alfred, nervously; "now for it!"

"Gen'l'men, will yer give us a trifle to drink your gals' health with? Do, yer honours."

The ruffians were edging up nearer and nearer. The young men walked briskly on.

"You be d—d!" said Harry.

"Stand back," added Alfred, "or I'll brain you!"

"Two can play at that game, master," replied the tallest of the men. "It's no use that way—it ain't. But be civil, gen'l'men, and we'll let you off for a fi-punner. Hillo, Jack, have at him! Blast the ——!"

Down came his bludgeon with tremendous force in the direction of Alfred's shoulders. Harry just warded it in time, dodged a similar blow from another fellow, intended for himself, then took to his heels after Featherstone, who was rushing down the lane at the top of his speed with his head grazed by a blow from a third of the bullies, whom, however, he knocked down with his life-preserver in his flight.

A few minutes at racing speed and they were out of danger, close to the town, and soon in King's Parade. Then they walked deliberately enough, and to the inquiring eyes of one or two proctors were merely two well-conducted under-grads going home rather late from a supper-party.

But those guardians of the morality of young gownsmen little dreamed of the hell of boiling passions in the heart of the biggest of the youths they encountered, and whose heavy tread resounded majestically on the pavement of the silent street as they passed. Once he stopped and faced his companion. "Knotty argument," thought the distant proctor, sleepily. He would have been rather more excited had he heard what was said in that low, fierce tone—more like a savage growl than a human voice.

"Featherstone, you've made me do what I never did in my life before. I'd rather have been brained by those bullies than have run from them. Give me that life-preserver: I'm going back."

"Nonsense, Harry! Do you mean going back to fight them?"

"That is what I mean—that I mayn't hate and despise myself to my dying day. Come, hand us the leads."

"You be blown! What infernal nonsense! Fight like a Samson, if you've got a cause worth fighting for; but to be smashed up by four Barnwell bullies—ugh!" And he walked on.

Fortescue stood irresolute for a few seconds, and then slowly followed him. Featherstone waited for him opposite the gate of Caius College, saying as his companion came up—

"All right, Hal. They were too many for us—couldn't have done differently."

"All right, do you say?" said Fortescue, between his teeth, eyeing Featherstone with a terrible look of ill-concealed wrath and disgust. "Seems to me the most damnable——"

"Never mind—good night!" said Featherstone, cutting him short, and walking off, for he saw the storm was coming.

Harry turned into his rooms, but not to bed. The whole night he sat before his fire, or walked up and down the room—not lighting his lamp, as if afraid to recognize his own existence too vividly. Towards morning he flung himself on the sofa, and lay in a brief, heavy torpor till his gyp knocked at the door. All next day he dragged himself listlessly about, looking (as indeed he felt) much like a miserable, craven cur that had been whipped for stealing.

About ten o'clock the following night, Featherstone, having primed himself with a good supper at a friend's and two or three

glasses of brandy-and-water, thought he would venture on rallying Fortescue's spirits and laughing him into a proper frame of mind, if, unhappily, he should not already have attained it.

Harry quietly rose to meet him. Contrary to the usual Cambridge custom (where men do not generally shake hands, except at beginning and end of term), Alfred held out his hand. Harry let it remain untaken. Whereupon Featherstone tried to make some playful allusion to the last night's proceedings, inquiring concerning Fortescue's health and general cheerfulness. Then he saw that Harry was glowering on him with a look of such deadly hatred that he could not finish his sentence, but broke off with "and so you see, &c.," while he knocked the ashes from his cigar against the chimney-piece.

"Alfred Featherstone," begun Fortescue, at length, very quietly, but with the calmness of suppressed passion, "I don't want to be rude, or to quarrel with you; but I would rather—I think we had better, for the present at all events—drop each other's acquaintance. I know, too well, I shall just never forgive you——"

Featherstone broke in desperately here—

"Forgive! What nonsense! What are you dreaming about, Harry? Are you nothing but a green girl after all? I shan't forgive *you* for this blasted folly and fuss if you talk like that, my dovey. Not forgive me!—ha, ha!—what for, pray?"

Fortescue's rising rage, and the effort to master it, almost choked him.

"Because you've helped me to do myself, and one who's gone to heaven, the worst wrong I could—a vile, beastly business I knew it all was, and *you* knew it, too, from the first night you took me to that harlots' hop in —— Street; but I saw it"—and his voice, for the moment, was a yell, then sank to a whisper that came hissing out between his teeth—"I *saw* it all as it is when you—curse you!—got me to run last night from the fear of a thrashing. That *you* should do these things, is no business of mine. I am not preaching to you. But that you should do them, and get me to do them, and see no infernal vileness, and bestiality, and cowardice in it——"

"Gammon! all gammon, my dear fellow; I've done you a precious good turn, and we'll soon be better friends than ever," cried Featherstone; but even his jaunty courage gave way, as thereupon Fortescue first griped his arm, then flung it from him, and said, with a concentrated expression of savage fury in his voice and eye—

"Fool! I hate and loathe you—more, even, than I do myself. You will have it?—then you shall! Mean, filthy, miserable coward! Was it for this?—that you might make me lose my manliness, and

become a beast and a coward like yourself, and fling my vileness in my dead father's face—was it for this, then, that I saved you—from choking in——” and his words gurgled in his throat, and then failed him.

A drear, momentary silence followed, while the two men stood glaring at each other; Featherstone, tucking up his sleeves and clenching his fists, as if to make a rush at his companion's face; for even his placid equanimity was at length disturbed, and almost for the first time in his life he felt stung into fierce resentment. But it was not Fortescue's brawny arms, half raised, that kept Alfred quiet. In the rage and humiliation of the moment, a sharp fight and the severest bodily pain would have been an immense relief to him. It was because (also for the first time in his life) he felt a pang of sharp, torturing shame and remorse, which seemed to paralyse his arms; for the first time, something of the consciousness and meaning of sin crept into his mind—a pang that just for the moment was agony. And as they stood there, face to face, and Fortescue's last words were still in their ears, each knew that the other was looking back to a summer night, not so very long ago, while a sound of rushing, muddy water was round them, thinking how one of them had been gasping out his life in the midst of those waters, and that the other had rescued him at the terrible hazard of his own life.

There they stood, like two savage, wild beasts, for a moment that seemed like years. Then Fortescue, throwing up his arms with a fierce gesture of defiance, turned away, growling out between his teeth—

“But what the h—ll do you care for all the mischief you have done me? I know you just think me a ———. What care I? Why *don't* you go, before there's mischief?”

Then he saw Featherstone's knees tremble—saw him sit down on the nearest chair—while a deadly paleness came over his face. Fortescue's rage was momentarily quelled by compassion; and, changing his tone by a spasmodic effort, he assumed an unnatural apologetic manner.

“I beg your pardon, sir,” he continued. “I don't want, didn't want to insult you. I'm not apologizing, you understand, Mr. Featherstone, from fear of the consequences. . . . Having shown the white feather lately, you might misapprehend; you might think me a coward, you see. It's not that exactly—I am sorry I said what I did—but you see there were two of us who ran last night—ha! ha! so it's not that, but—only we'll drop each other's acquaintance for the future, if you please. Good evening,

sir. There's the door—there. Go, if you please; and a curse go with you!”

So Alfred Featherstone stumbled, savage and dizzy, through the door, and as he went down the stairs, he kept muttering to himself—“Ah, it's well he apologized. But he saved my life, the hulking beggar! didn't he!”

Then, as he shuffled along the quadrangle, he went on—“What a rage the d—d brute was in! rot him! And I have brought death and the devil home to him in return. So he says,—the ass. The man *is* a fool. No mistake; yes, a *fool*. But *if* what he says is true, if he was *right*, what are you, Master Alfred Featherstone? A cursed deal worse than any fool. . . . If he says the truth, I think he had better—I don't know—yes, perhaps, better have left me lying in Thames mud; better—yes; I'm doing little good as it is. He thinks I've brought him down to the pit. Perhaps,—and myself too.” By this time Featherstone had got into the street. “Nonsense; its all my eye! He's a regular ass. . . . Which of us? But there's that same Thames mud always ready, when one's better out of the way. And yet, perhaps, gin and bitters is the wiser course on the whole, and,—praise the pigs! there's a house open still. Here goes.”

* * * * *

CHAPTER XVI.

It was the following day, about 6 p.m. Dark November fogs, with a tendency to drizzle. It had been heavy work for Gerald Arlington, in consequence of a large vessel having to be cleared out for Bombay, with a very miscellaneous cargo, and some very impatient shippers. So he had worked on till late, and then dined in town. He was returning to finish his work, and was groping his way under the archway that led to the counting-house, when he felt a heavy hand on his shoulder. He started back, for there had been several daring robberies committed lately in these evening fogs. Then a deep, husky voice said, “Never mind; its only——” The voice was strangely altered, he thought, but it must be Harry's,

and he exclaimed, "What, you here, old boy! How d'ye do?" and he shook the great paw heartily. It did not return his hearty shake, however, and Gerald wondered more and more what was the matter.

"What on earth brings you here? Precious glad to see you though,—that is, if I could see you. Come in, Harry, come in. Where do you last hail from? I thought you were snug at Cambridge."

"I left this morning. Got a fortnight's leave. I have been waiting here nearly an hour. The housekeeper said you were sure to return, as your books were not put away."

"Well, but do come in. You are shivering as if you'd the ague. What *has* brought you up?"

"Never mind. Finish your work. And then let's go to some place where we can be by ourselves."

"All right. I shall soon have done, and we can go to my father's counting-house back parlour, and have a cup of coffee."

So they went. Gerald had been struck with the look on his friend's face, and gradually noticed the worn, weary manner which showed itself alternating with wild excitement. He soothed him with what little friendly attentions he could offer; but when, at length, he got him to speak, Gerald thought that some fearful accident or disease had driven Fortescue into temporary insanity. He didn't believe what his friend incoherently muttered or raved, and felt utterly at a loss to know how to deal with him.

"Come, come, old fellow, don't talk such wretched bosh. You've not been going on in that way, I know. Just say you're gammoning me, &c."

"By all the devils in hell," exclaimed Fortescue, fiercely, striking the table with his clenched fist, "I tell you it *is* true! Why, *don't* you believe me? But you think I'm mad," said he, with a bitter laugh. Then, dropping his voice into a hollow, broken tone, so utterly unlike anything Gerald had ever heard from him before that it made his blood chill, he continued—

"No, no; I'm in my senses, fast enough, *now*. . . . Oh, Gerry, Gerry, if that girl would but have loved me as I loved her," and the strong man laid his head upon his hands, and sobbed like a child. Then Gerald believed all he had told him, and the iron entered his own heart, too. He had loved and honoured Fortescue so very highly. They had so long shared each other's aspirations after a high and manly life; resolved together so often, and with such deep solemnity, to try and live up to a nobler standard than was common around them, that the thought of his friend's

fall came to him like a terrible personal calamity. He could not utter a word. The silence was broken by Harry.

"You despise me! I know you do. I know I deserve it. I know all you are thinking of, Gerald. You are the very last man on earth whom I would have had to know all this; and yet—" and then again his voice became strangely mournful, as if his words were wrung from the depths of his agony, like drops of blood from a man on the rack—"and yet—and yet don't hate me, Gerry; you were always a better fellow than I."

Gerald's only answer was something between a groan and a growl. "Don't talk like that," he said, at length, hardly suppressing an expletive more forcible than polite. "Harry," he continued, spasmodically, "the best thing about me has been that I have loved you, and always shall, come what may."

"God in heaven bless you, old fellow!" replied Harry, drawing his hand across his eyes; "more than once I was going to turn back."

"Harry, of course you did right to come," said Gerald. "I can't tell you how I thank you for coming; but oh, Harry, Harry, I *am* so sorry——"

"I know, Gerry; but to whom *could* I come but to you? and I felt I must speak it all out to some one. You had always gone with me in my old dreams and resolutions—you knew what reason I had for them. I felt I must escape from—not myself only. Oh, Gerald, don't *you* give me up!" and the young man laid hold of his friend's arm, and glanced at his face as if he felt there was some haunting horror behind him, and he didn't dare to look at it. "Gerald," he continued, in a half whisper, "don't think me mad; but, you know, it seems to me as if there was always a terrible eye looking down upon me—my poor, poor father, you know—and I *cannot* get away from it."

"Do not try, my Hal," answered Gerald, looking up and grasping Harry's hand. "It is better so. You may thank God you do feel it so deeply. Oh, Harry, that *is* a blessing—just the greatest left you, I fancy. Don't shirk that misery. Thank God for it, Harry. It shows we are in life, not death, when we can feel like that."

"Yes, I know. I can, and will bear my punishment. I haven't an ounce of pride left in me. I will be very thankful that I can and do feel all this horrid pain. But—oh, Gerry, Gerry,"—and he got up and walked about the room—"to think what I have thrown away—what can never, never more be mine! This relation of man and woman, Gerald! . . . God meant it to be so unspeakably holy and beautiful; and I used to look forward so to marrying . . . and thought of woman and marriage as something so pure

and beautiful. . . . And now . . . Gerry . . . constantly I seem to hear my father saying, 'You've married . . . a harlot!' . . ."

And he smote his forehead, with a wild, frenzied laugh, as he strode up and down the room; then, in the previous mournful, dreary tone, sitting down, and covering his face with his hands, he went on:—

"I know lots of fellows would call me a regular ass . . . and say this was all bounce and sham, and a storm in a teacup, and so forth; but, Gerry, you and I know better. It is a brutal piece of business altogether, Gerry. No love—no love—only mere, vile, animal passion!"

He remained some minutes with his head buried in his hands, and then exclaimed, with terrible energy, throwing up his arms as he started again to his feet—

"Oh, God! make me a man,—and not a beast!"

"He will do it, Harry, rely upon that. He will deliver you, and forgive you," replied Arlington, hardly knowing what he said.

"Heaven bless you, dear old Gerry, for that word. I believe it. I do believe it, for I've been reading or saying over the 15th chapter of Luke all the way down. Yes, God, some day, will forgive me; but, Gerry,"—then a long breath—"God may forgive me, and then my father will forgive me, too, I trust, some day; but—never,—more—can woman be to me what she might have been—what God meant she should be. Oh, Adelaide, Adelaide!" Then another groan—so sad in its utter despair.

"But we had better make an end of this, Gerry," he said, soon after, with a great effort. "You can't do any more for me now—God in Heaven bless you, old fellow, for what you have done. I am going down to Exeter to-night——"

"To Exeter?"

"Yes. I don't know if I shall ever go back to Cambridge. It's the life up there plays the devil with a fellow, if you once get off the track. . . . The way they talk is enough to . . ."

"Harry, it is just as bad in London; or anywhere, I suppose, if a chap chooses to——" he stopped.

"To drink, you were going to say, and idle away his time, and swim with loose fish, and go to dancing saloons, and, perhaps, pitch himself into miserable, morbid fancies, which make him jump at any excitement to get rid of them, and so drown the memories and bury the hopes of the past. Oh, yes, I know one can't escape the fight by running away. I suppose I must go back to Cambridge

again some day, but I've got leave of absence till after Christmas, and I'm going to walk about Dartmoor."

"Walk about Dartmoor!" exclaimed Gerald in amazement.

"Yes," replied Harry, quietly; "I know it of old. My poor dad took me there—his last holiday on earth; and I've got this for a companion." And in the book which he drew from his breast pocket Gerald recognised a little Bible given to Harry years ago by his father.

So they went together to the "Two-necked Swan" (*recte* "Two-nicked"), in Lad Lane, where a night-coach was about to start for the capital of the west. There they shook hands very dismally, and went their several ways.

[HARRY FORTESCUE TO GERALD ARLINGTON.]

"Moreton Hampstead, Nov. 29/33.

"I travelled day and night till I got here; horrid pain at one's heart, and thought I was in for a regular illness when I lay down at last in bed. I was racked with pain in my limbs, and hot and cold all at once, as if Nova Zembla and Calcutta had been pounded up into a concentrated dose for my special benefit. But I slept it off, and never woke for fifteen hours, though the landlord fetched a doctor to look at me. Oh! that blessed, healing sleep. God is merciful to me, Gerry. I wanted to be alone with Him, and my sorrow, and sin. . . . I see now I trusted too much to myself. God grant I may have learnt my lesson for life. . . . I've been wandering about here day after day, and only fear I am sometimes too happy. Yet it's a mockery to call it happiness, when every alternate hour brings torture. But Fingal's Bridge and Lustleigh Cleeve, even at this time of the year, are magnificent, and the wild, desolate Tors. Oh! thank God that I can walk among them now, and ask Him to create in me a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within me. I know He answers me. . . . Yet, oh, the pity of it! Johnny, oh, the pity of it! Write to me by return, at 'Two Bridges Inn,' Dartmoor.

"Ever thine old friend,

"H. F.

"P.S.—I shall go to my sister's home when I leave Devonshire; and she's a saint, if ever there was one."

The loving welcome of Neville Court was very soothing to the troubled spirit when it returned from its lonely vigils and sore wrestlings on the dreary wilds of Dartmoor. Harry Fortescue valued for a time his sister's company as he had never done before.

"It's all nonsense," thought he to himself, as he stood by the fire the first night of his arrival, after the ladies had retired, while his eyes grew misty—"there can't be one standard of purity for a man, and another for a woman. The degradation and sin must be the same in both, it seems to me, if both are made in God's image, and possess equally immortal souls. The man can't be privileged to defile himself because he is on a higher level than a woman. And I shouldn't exactly like to think that uncleanness is no sin in *us* because we are in a lower rank of creation—more of a beast, in fact, than a woman is. What should I think of Nelly if she had sinned as I have? How should I meet her? And what would she—what *ought* she to think of me if she knew all? Oh, sister, sister! will you go up to Heaven in your white-souled purity, and leave me grovelling here, or in some lower pit of darkness, with only the impure and vile for my companions? And yet, what right have I to ask her still to care for me, and treat me as she used to do, while I conceal from her my own baseness? Would she be behaving honourably to *me*, if she acted thus? Yet I dare not tell her. How can I dare to sully her purity by speaking of—And yet, perhaps, it would be far, far better, if mothers and sisters knew a little more of the frightful evils to which those they love are exposed. I don't know—I can't guess—what I ought to do. Merciful God, teach me!" And during the dark watches of a sleepless night God did teach him, and so plainly bade him confess his sin that he could no longer doubt. And the Divine Teacher shewed him how he could do this simply and humbly—by saying in general terms that he had fallen and stained his soul (as too many do, without either penitence or remorse), and pleading earnestly for her help to rise and walk without again stumbling. And then he learnt, too, how closely we are linked with those whom we love, and how the innocent must help to bear the burdens of the guilty, even because they love them; how it is at once the curse of sin that it involves the innocent in its own suffering, and yet the privilege of those who love the sinner to share and help to remove that suffering. And so the sad heart that night saw farther than he had ever done before into the divine mystery of "Thy manifestation on earth, who

. didst stoop below
To drain the cup of woe,
And wear the form of frail mortality."

It was a dark day for poor Nelly when her brother gave her some general idea of the reason why he had been wandering in the desert, and now stood before her with pale, worn face, so different from

what he had always been before—the darkest day since she had heard of the death of him who she fondly believed had gone in his manly purity, and brave, self-sacrificing death, to Heaven—gone, with the whiteness of *his* soul preserved amid contamination, by the divine power of a loyal and *mutual* love, that had grown up with him from boyhood. She had been engaged some few years before to a young lieutenant in the Navy, as fine a fellow as ever stepped the quarter-deck, but who had been drowned in a gale while trying to save a poor midgy that had fallen overboard.

“There are few sorrows heavier,” thought she, at her solitary devotions that night, “than to find those we most loved and honoured not worthy of all the honour we gave them. And yet it is better, oh! infinitely better, we should know more than sisters generally do of the sad temptations to which those we love are exposed. Thank God, some are safe in Heaven.”

And so, though his sorrow was indeed heavy, it brought with it a blessing to Nelly in a consciousness of increased usefulness to her brother—of being still wanted in the world—and brought also a great happiness in believing his assurances of the unspeakable blessing she was to him in this season, when “all the bright lights of Heaven were made dark over him.”

“How wonderfully does that grand old liturgy meet all the varying wants of our common life,” observed Harry to his sister, as they returned together from church the following Sunday.

“Yes; it may well be called ‘Common Prayer.’ I should think that while a person heartily loved and used it, and observed its ordinances, he would be greatly shielded from temptation.

“True; but from constant repetition, it becomes, too often, so hackneyed and common-place to us,—till we have known some of the great sorrows and conflicts of life.”

“But, *having* known them, do you not think,” asked Nelly, nervously, for she felt the subject to be one of overpowering importance, “that you might now resolve to minister at the altar, and lead sinning, struggling souls through Christ to God?”

“No, Ellen,” he replied, sadly; “I am further from it than ever. I am not cut out for that kind of thing. I know it more decisively now than a year ago. And yet,” he continued, with a burst of his old, energetic combativeness, “I mean with God’s help to work for Him somehow. Don’t think I’m beaten, Nelly. I’ll stand to my guns, and fight the old serpent to the last, by all that’s sacred.”

“Resisting unto blood, striving against sin,” murmured Ellen, looking up at him with beaming eyes.

“Aye, and if I *do* battle with suffering and sin, not merely for

myself, but to save others, will not you, and he who waits for you, give me a welcome by-and-bye, poor Nelly?" He bent to kiss her, and she knew that life was very precious still.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE village clock was striking the midnight hour as Gerald Arlington rose from his desk in the bedroom study, where he was working away, night after night, at the drama which was to emancipate him from his Leadenhall Street prison. The moon was high in the unclouded heavens, and, as he peered through the frost-heckered window-pane, a brilliant scene lay before him. Far and wide the sheeny radiance bathed the landscape in silvery splendour—even the tall elms and more humble groups of picturesque trees which studded the paternal grounds were lighted up with sparkling hoar-frost, and the ice-bound lakelet, swept clear for skaters, alone lay in dark shadow. The young dreamer's heart beat with strange joy. He had finished the first act of his play, and, as he thought, successfully. He had sketched out the whole plot, and scenes, dialogues, effective, startling "situations," pathetic appeals, heart-breaking moments, and a terrible catastrophe had come crowding, leaping, dancing, rushing into his soul. He felt that his dreams were coming true—ininitely precious moments, no doubt,—long to be remembered for each young poet, artist, orator, when, after interminable years of failures and hope deferred (for they seem ages to ingenuous but impatient youth); after years of passionate desire, and feverish faith, he first gets an assured conviction that to him also is given power to *create*—power to move the springs of passion or admiration in other souls. How many of these young enthusiasts have bitterly rued that discovery! How many more have lived to find it was a belief as false as fatal! But no after-disappointment, no long years of suffering, can deprive them of the divine memories that tell them they were once in heavenly company, and may be admitted there again.

Another ball—this time at Wimbledon—at a Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner's. So much of the romance of early youth in the middle

and upper classes is transacted at balls, soirées, dinner-parties, archery meetings, and picnics—these being the chief opportunities which young folks in those circles have of making each other's acquaintance—that we are often compelled, in the course of this veracious history, to glance at such demented proceedings; and we accordingly now proceed to look in upon the aforesaid brilliant assembly gathered to celebrate Twelfth-Night. Bright, frosty weather; skating, and long, brisk walks by day, music and dancing by night, with various guests coming and going through the week—all this was a splendid way of spending life. So thought Adelaide Featherstone. So thought the county baronet's only son, whose intentions and inclinations were becoming more and more decided. He had taken time to consider. He had ranged inquiringly through all the West End parties of last spring, and considered Adelaide Featherstone, on the whole, decidedly the most attractive card for the "run matrimonial," whenever that inevitable contest must come off, as he was gradually becoming convinced it had better do speedily. Other ways of amusing himself were both expensive and dangerous—all very well for a season—but, under paternal influence, he began to think it was time he should shut up, and take to the moral and respectable line of luxurious existence. So the particular ball in question was rather a critical season. And not less so for another young gentleman, whom the stalwart heir-apparent was rather inclined to despise for being generally occupied with "moonshine" of various kinds, and for not being six feet high. Height and moonshine, however, notwithstanding, the heir-apparent, Etonian and Oxonian as he had been, was told in confidence that he would find it hard work to get at Arlington's wickets, or to pull against him in a Thames wherry. But then he was heir to a title and £10,000 a year, while Arlington was only a ship-broker's clerk at £100. And the heir's great-grandfather having been a court parasite in the reign of George II., who received title and lands from the monarch for rather questionable services, the present heir naturally felt a slight contempt for all men who have to earn their bread before eating it. Tall, well-proportioned, and self-possessed, moreover witty and clever in the average feminine estimation, this fortunate young gentleman was generally deemed irresistible. At all events, Adelaide Featherstone found him so, and surrendered her heart unconditionally that night to his rather haughty blandishments, and confident wooing. Perhaps she was the readier to do this, because it had cost her more to forget Mr. Fortescue than she would have liked to own. Papa and mamma were in a state of

extremely delighted excitement. They vainly pretended to "take it coolly." It was in reality the happiest moment in their own lives since the mutual explanations which resulted in their being known to the world as Mr. and Mrs. Featherstone. It might be worth considering what sort of foundation they had for this supreme satisfaction.

Harry Fortescue and his sister were also among the guests. He would have gone, just because on several accounts he intensely disliked going, and because, in fact, he felt half afraid of going. For it had been one of his maxims from boyish days (strongly inculcated by him of course, on Gerald) to do anything he particularly disliked or feared to do, just for the purpose of "strengthening his will"—also, it may be, because, as we have seen, he was always on the look-out for a fight, either with himself, or anybody else. For instance: finding once on a visit with his father to Clifton, when a mere lad, that it made him giddy to walk near the edge of St. Vincent's rocks, he forced himself (unconsciously following Goethe's example on Strasburg Cathedral) to stand, and gradually to walk, within a few inches of the edge. On the same principle, with his usual combativeness, he had more than once gone into a public meeting, and attempted to make a furious speech diametrically in opposition to the object for which it was called—narrowly escaping very rough handling—escaping, in fact, only by being unable at length to conceal his immense enjoyment of the fun, and thus enlisting in his defence the strong sense of humour always latent in an English crowd. On the same combative principle, had there been no other reason—though without much fun in his heart—he would have resolved to come to the Gardiners' "hop," knowing he should meet Adelaide, probably her lover, and perhaps her brother, all of whom he would gladly have gone miles to avoid. Yes—face them all!—young prigs, old fogies, and silly girls.

But quite independently of this motive, and perhaps outweighing it, there was a strange, mysterious attraction drawing him thither of which he was scarcely conscious. He had been exerting that magnificent power of will of his for many months in subjugating his lower nature, as in earlier days; and the stronger he felt in his victory, the more he longed to look down again on a certain fair young face, that once, in an hour of deep wretchedness, had looked kindly, reverently up to him—longed to hear again certain well-remembered tones, feeling as if he would find therein palm-trees, and a fountain in the midst of his desert wanderings. So he promised to accompany Ellen, telling Gerald he was going to the

Wimbledon ball merely because it was good for her, while of course she told Leila she was going only because she thought it good for her brother to "go a little into society." But when the brother got to the ball he went "mooning" about like a man in a dream, until at last, after moving through a quadrille with Leila, he found himself having a long *tête-à-tête* with that young lady in a shaded recess. With a blush-rose tint on her delicately-pale cheeks from excitement and exercise, Leila Featherstone was pronounced "lovely" by Miss Fortescue; also by several discerning young gentlemen. Fortescue half thought the same. But even then his dreamy air and quiet sort of sadness made him what most young ladies would have considered a dull companion. But to Leila he was far more fascinating thus than the gayest cavalier that ever adored her sister. Neither was the fascination all one side, for when Harry once began to talk with her on really interesting topics, and to look into her eyes, now liquid with soft, loving, thoughts, and then flashing out in lofty enthusiasm, he felt himself drawn into the whirlpool not less powerfully than his poor friend Gerald had been before him. Leila was very happy that night—would have been perfectly so if Alfred had but arrived. He was at a bachelor's dinner-party in town, but promised to be with them by 11 p.m. at latest. One o'clock and supper-time came, however, but he did not. Still he would soon come—and she gave herself up in the meantime to the delicious enjoyment of Harry's emphatic attentions. True, she did not find in Mr. Fortescue's conversation a tithe of the æsthetic satisfaction which she had always experienced in conversing with Gerald Arlington. Years afterwards she remembered and understood all this, but not then. That evening she was in a giddy whirl of excitement, and perhaps if Harry Fortescue had then and there asked her to walk out with him into the night—on and on through the world, and the universe, and eternity—she could have found it in her heart to ask her parents' leave, and tie on her bonnet and go with him at once; and never have thought about anything or any being on earth beside him (so long as the enchantment lasted).

Gerald Arlington had come from London with his father and mother in the family drag—for in those days parents and young people were invited to balls together, the elders being comfortably provided with card-tables. To Gerald it was an occasion of overwhelming interest, for it was the first chance he had got of a chat with Leila Featherstone since the memorable dinner-party.

Now, as usual in such cases, a natural desire, and an equally natural reluctance, to speak on this sacred theme to Fortescue had

long contended in his mind ; but the reluctance had been so greatly increased by Fortescue's revelation to him of his fall, that hitherto it had conquered. With the unconscious instinct of manly purity, he felt that it was infinitely better to leave all talk of womankind far out of sight for at least a time ; while Harry's moodiness that evening made him repress the strong inclination he then felt, on seeing his goddess, to whisper a hint of his admiration to his friend.

Hence Harry spent that night at the Wimbledon dance utterly ignorant of the romantic passion which was agitating his susceptible friend. Gerald's exalted dreams, however, made him strangely awkward and nervous, so that he certainly did not appear to great advantage that night. Hence, when two or three of his young aristocratic admirers, in the course of conversation introduced him to the "heir," that gay, yet proud and muscular hero privately observed, "Well, the poetical young man from the city seems to me rather a muff, after all."

As for the lovely but most incomprehensible damsel who had thus unconsciously thrown the poor poet off his balance with her fascinations, she, the little puss, had been receiving considerable attentions from several rather agreeable young gentlemen this winter—particularly during the last few days. Two or three University men—friends of Alfred—in particular had been remarkably attentive. They talked delightfully about the new poet, "Tennyson," and the "Noctes Ambrosianæ" and "Wallenstein." Her glass would persist, too, in hinting that she was rather better-looking than formerly ; and altogether—like her poet-lover, who knew that he was actually writing a tragedy—she began to feel a little of *her* power also, though in a different line of action. Yet she was unfeignedly glad to see Gerald, and the recollection of all that passed the last time they met, in the midst of lights and music, company and roses—especially the bantering she had had to sustain at the hands of Adelaide, and even of Alfred, respecting that long *tête-à-tête*—brought a tell-tale blush of much deeper shade than usual to her lily-fair cheek when he greeted her, and tried to get an opportunity of conversation. The blush looked very charming. It made Gerald's heart beat fast. Ah, those fascinating and most delusive blushes ! How many a young unfortunate—fresh from college or the desk—has floundered into dismal swamps of "rejected addresses," lured by those "will-o'-the-wisps," the eloquent, maidenly, most seductive blushes of his beloved. For, observe, if the young lady has been joked about him, she is almost certain to blush when she next meets him—valuing him, nevertheless, all the

time, perhaps, about as much as an old riband! Let young lovers reflect on this fact in Natural History.

Of course, Gerald seized the first opportunity of a dance and a talk with the young girl who had bewitched him with her sorceries; looking to her for that sympathy in his literary dreams which he craved for with such passionate desire. Her appearance and manner were, no doubt, vastly improved, and to him were more fascinating than ever.

She was all the world to *him*. But, with the terrible clairvoyance of ardent love, he saw too plainly that she had now far other worlds in which *she* lived, or longed to wander, than that which held them in its little nook when he first gave up his whole heart to love and worship her. Why dwell upon what followed?

He asked whether she would care to read the play, if he could complete it according to his dreams.

"Oh, certainly," she answered in rather an off-hand fashion; "it would give me much pleasure to read any work of that kind. Pray let me see it when it is finished."

And Gerald turned away stunned and heart-sick, took his hat, and went out from the brilliant ball room into the moon-lit road, with great darkness in his own soul.

Was Leila to blame for his crushing disappointment? Was it her fault that she was so attractive, or his fault that he had seen and felt her witchcraft in his heart's core, and so floated into a fool's paradise? Or was it her fault that she had been so truly and deeply interested in all he had said to her months ago, that she could not help showing it when they first met again, and feeling grateful to him exceedingly? No, no, the fault was not there. But the world would say there were two grave errors on his side. The first was that of a young poet's fancying he had a right to love, and ask for love again, without a single thought of the necessary £400, or even £200, a year, wherewith to support a wife in comfort and peace. And the second, perhaps the greater *culpa* in the eyes of unworldly people, was the daring to seek the young lady's affections without the slightest thought of what her parents might have to say in the matter. "Surely we have some right," say parents, "to know what is being thought and done with regard to a subject so solemnly, perhaps eternally, affecting our child's character, happiness, and destiny?" All this, whether right or wrong, never for an instant flashed on the poor poet-clerk's moral sense, and, justly or unjustly, heavy was the penalty he had to pay in later years. But his blindness to it was very closely connected with another singular feature in his wooing.

Ardent youths accustomed to pursue with graceful gallantry the brilliant butterflies of the season—yes, and even more earnest and not less impassioned admirers of female loveliness, like poor Harry Fortescue—would turn a scornful gaze upon Gerald Arlington as he shrunk into himself after his first quadrille and subsequent talk with Leila Featherstone, and would impatiently ask what could the man be made of to be disheartened just at the beginning of his courtship. Of course, he must not expect that the young lady would feel towards him at first as he did to her. Of course, he *must* expect a great deal of hindrance. What then? to overcome such indifference, nay, reluctance, was the best part of the fun, and at all events, was the only natural course in which courtship ever could properly run. True enough, no doubt. Gerald Arlington was very foolish, according to most standards—as inconsiderate as a child. But ardent young gentlemen, and lively young ladies who might be disposed to think him a ninny, can look out at another window if they choose, and see if the view be not a little better than they thought for. Yet let them look (if they look at all, which is by no means necessary) in a reverent mood, for there are phases of character which we are the better for beholding with a little respect—the worse for mocking at. The view, then, from the said window is this: young Arlington did not at first fall in love with Leila Featherstone merely because she struck his fancy or fired his imagination—nor because he had been drinking, or even because he thought she would make him a charming wife—but because he felt that her soul was beautiful, and that her face reflected it, and that she satisfied a great aching want of his highest nature, and seemed to be drawing him up to heights of dreamy radiance whenever he looked at her. He thought her spirit had come forth to meet and to blend with his in holy, heavenly communion, and that, therefore, they were the true complement of each other's being—created to grow up into perfect manhood and womanhood together, until together they entered on a nobler existence in a more perfect union above. Therefore, it never entered his head that he was to pursue her, and circumvent and finally subdue unto himself her woman's heart, or by various devices gradually attract her reluctant love. True, there were deep, strong passions sleeping in his soul—a lower nature there as well as a higher—but, even as his poetic temperament and refined taste, especially a chivalrous respect for woman, had heretofore helped to preserve him from the various pollutions around him and kept his soul pure, so now they made his love for Leila at once morbidly sensitive and intensely spiritual. But, if he were mistaken in supposing that he could be to her what

she was to him, if he were *not* "the ocean to the river of her thoughts," there the matter ended, and he had no more to say about it but that his life would be one long regret. In precisely the same way he would never have dreamt of money considerations or parental claims. "Love is of God," and true marriages, he believed, were ordained by God; and if Leila and himself were meant for each other, and in mutual love would fulfil the highest destiny human beings could attain on earth, all other needful things (including at least £200 a year) would in due course be added, and those who loved them best would ultimately be glad they had come together. Strange dreamer! * * * *

No, Leila was not to blame, however much Gerald might be. At first she was vexed that he seemed so disappointed with her and her answers. But she soon forgot for a time, in the delight of Mr. Fortescue's presence, both her sorrow at seeing that Mr. Arlington was unhappy, and her wonderment as to what could possibly be its cause. For Harry Fortescue asked her again to dance, and then *would* keep her talking such a long time in that sweet little conservatory, though his conversation was not so exciting as Gerald's, and had not a tinge of Poetry or Art about it. It was thoughtful, and full of certain stern, strong life—"Very different," she said, "from that of most young men's chatter." Hence, she felt lifted out of herself, and elevated in her own esteem, while his deep low tones were in her ear, and his sad earnest eyes were sometimes bent upon her, and anon actually stealing furtive glances at the mystic stars. For all his old aspirations after a Divine Peace were again called forth by the sweet and lofty harmonies of this young girl's nature; and she made him thirst also, as of old, for that healing and HEALTH in the highest sense, which was one of the deepest desires of his better nature. His constant thought, in all his better moods, was how to realize this state of Health and Peace for other men even more than for himself. And there was something in the quiet power of Leila Featherstone's character when combined, as it was, with so much latent enthusiasm and feminine grace, that carried him above his lower passions and ignoble miseries. It was a totally different feeling from that which had once drawn him to her sister, but far nobler.

Once during that evening's conversation he found he had got into one of his favourite subjects—fighting and battles—and then saw with delight that he need not apologize for his taste, as it was evident that she was full of vehement though repressed sympathy. For an instant she seemed lost in a wild vision, and stood once more with her brother on the mountains of Ambleside, gazing on the

stormy sunset sky beyond Loughrigg Fell. And when Fortescue remarked on her interest in the subject, her whole face lighted up with a bright glow of bashful gladness, as she answered that it was because she saw he rejoiced in the fighting, and sought for victory only, that he might establish peace. Thereupon, he spoke so enthusiastically of the triumphs that might and should be won, by God's help, over all disease and disorder, over unrighteousness and pain, that, as she listened, her young heart believed the heroic age of Greece might yet return under Christian influence and English skies, and that millions might yet live to bless the brave young dragon-slayer who stood beside her, picking a damask rose to pieces. Then he enlarged upon the noble art of Healing, and so linked it with the idea of benevolent self-sacrificing zeal that, for the time, the maiden felt more interested than even when Gerald had talked to her of Art. And then suddenly the thought flashed through her mind, how strange and charming it was that two such young men as these should actually care to pour into her ear their lofty enthusiasm—their glowing dreams of Beauty and Nobleness. What a contrast life presented now to her previous existence! Yet the consciousness of her joy covered her with confusion, and she longed to escape. But then, to see that she actually cheered her somewhat stern companion—to see that the shadow was passing away from his rugged, thoughtful brow, that he was being drawn out of his gloomy indifference, and was not only caring to talk to her, but was all the better for their talk—strange and sweet indeed! How could she be grateful enough for such singular privileges? In her happiness she remembered the cloud on Gerald's countenance, and longed to disperse it. It was comforting to think these two young gentlemen were such dear friends. They would cheer and raise each other. She remarked to Mr. Fortescue that she thought his friend had a very poetical and interesting mind. But Harry was thinking how little Gerald had seemed to appreciate Leila Featherstone, and that this was not the first time that he had seen symptoms in her of a disposition to admire his friend. How could he help feeling slightly jealous, and answering somewhat coldly, adding that Gerry was capricious—didn't know when he was well off, for that he had come to him about an hour ago and told him he was going "to cut," preferring a walk to London by moonlight, to staying any longer there. This announcement vexed Leila, for, of course, she connected it with his look when they last conversed together. Harry perceived her vexation, and his own was increased. As Leila and her partner mingled again in the crowd she looked anxiously for Alfred, and

asked Harry with playful reproach, if he didn't want to see his friend. Just at that moment she heard her father mention Alfred's name aside to Adelaide.

"Yes, he's got home, and, finding he wouldn't come here, I just stepped across, as your mother seemed anxious."

"Well, papa?"

"Well, all the reason he gave was that he didn't choose to come because young Fortescue was here. However, it is quite as well he stayed where he is."

For a moment the blush-rose tint forsook poor Leila's cheek, and then, as she saw by a glance at Harry's face that he also had heard this, her face and neck were covered with a deeper tinge, and, unable to conceal her feelings, yet too confused to know what to say, she murmured—

"Oh, Mr. Fortescue, what is the matter?"

"I don't know," answered Harry, coldly, half contemptuously. "Perhaps he has cut me."

Leila could say no more, but her joy was gone, and she could only recover her peace of mind when the gay pageant had all passed away, and she sat in her dressing-gown beside her little bed, and read according to her wont a few verses from the old Book, and cast her burden on Him who is faithful evermore.

For Leila knew too well what her father's last words meant, and Alfred's estrangement from Mr. Fortescue she feared was a sign that he was sinking lower than even Harry's friendship could stoop. There was another sad alternative suggested by a stray word dropped once by her poor mother when very miserable about her darling boy, and when she was at the same time anxious to chase any possible lingering interest from Adelaide's mind in her quondam lover. Leila thought it was just possible that Mr. Fortescue might be very different from what she believed, and that her brother was shrinking from an intimacy which he felt was leading him astray. Hence, as soon as their very late breakfast the next morning was concluded, she coaxed Alfred to come into the library by the promise of reading him some poetry she had written, and of which he had caught a glimpse a few days before. But the reading did not begin. The brother and sister sat silently looking into the fire, till at length Leila lifted tearful eyes to Alfred's still handsome but now pallid face and blood-shot eyes, and, as a conviction of the ruin going on within, which those outward changes too surely marked, forced itself upon her, she leant her head on his shoulder and cried bitterly. He tried to soothe her, but ended by almost sobbing himself.

“Has he, has Mr. Fortescue,” at length asked the weeping girl, “has he been leading you the wrong way, Freddy? Is that why you would not come last night?”

“No, no—he has cut me. I’m not good enough for him. I don’t mean it sneeringly; it’s just the truth.”

What strangely mingled emotions, sweet and bitter, surged up in poor Leila’s mind: deep sorrow for Alfred, gratitude that Harry Fortescue might still be looked up to. But Alfred’s conscience was at last fully roused.

“Oh, Lily, Lily-bell!” he cried, “I know I’m going to the devil as fast as wine and cards and worse folly can take me. My poor little Lily. And mother, she believes me still, I think, everything that’s virtuous and charming. But I will put an end to this—I’ll pull up, by heaven! Lily, I will. I must cut that University life; it plays the deuce with a fellow.”

“Will you not come back to the counting-house, dear,” said Leila, wiping her eyes, “and live at home? Then, you know, we can be as much to each other as we used to be. I do so want you to come back, Freddy, and to love me and talk with me as you used to do.”

“God bless you, dear little pussy-cat,” and, with something of his old affection, he gave her a hearty kiss, and then knelt down beside her with his face in his hands. When he rose up, there was a clearer, holier light in his eye than Leila or anyone else had seen for many a day.

“No, my child, I can’t go back to the counting-house, that would be worse than all; but I’ll give myself heart and soul to painting. I *can* live in that, and so get out of old habits and do without old companions when I’m ‘*totus in illis*’; as I taught you Latin, I suppose I may quote it.” And his face lighted up with the smile she remembered so well years ago. “Yes, one must have a master passion—if you have any ‘*go*’ in you at all, and that is the highest I can give myself up to. So will you talk to my father, and I’ll tell my mother; and we must try to get him to make me an allowance, and to get Mr. Claude Fenton to give me a few lessons till I can earn my own livelihood and make a home of my own; when, if you are not disposed of, old lady, you shall come to keep house for me. Won’t that be jolly, eh, Miss Pussykin?” And they laughed together then; perhaps all the better, because they had cried and prayed together before. “And now, Dolly, show me your verses, that’s a good little soul, and then I’ll produce something I scribbled one night.”

“Oh, I shall be so glad to see it. But you must show first.”

With coy reluctance, however, Leila was compelled to begin the reading with her poetical effusion, to which Alfred listened with wondering delight; and then he tried to read his own wild, mournful lament for the "Days that are gone;" but his voice quivered so that Leila was fain to take it and finish it herself, which she did—not without tears. The lines were beautiful, and yet so despairing.

* * * * *

So far so well; but no further.

Mr. Featherstone was already indignant enough with his son's proceedings at Cambridge, of which he had lately received a private hint from a Tutor of Trinity; and when Alfred penitentially confessed the amount of his debts, the old gentleman got into such a passion as frightened even his wife, and made all attempts to promote Alfred's views fruitless. His son should leave Cambridge forthwith, no doubt; but not a penny more would he give him until he had earned it by hard work in the counting-house. His wife and Alfred, and, above all, Leila, were in despair—very miserable—and there we must leave them for the present.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SAME day as that recorded in last chapter—time, evening. Harry and Gerry discovered swinging their heels in the private room of a renowned City chop-house, where they were accustomed to *rendezvous*.

"Have you any idea how Richard is going on?" quoth Harry, after a long silence.

"I believe he is doing very well," replied Gerald.

"I don't."

"Why? and what's the row?"

"Pierce gave me a hint about the young gentleman going it rather fast."

"Indeed!"—and the speaker looked up at Harry with an anxious glance. A little more passed, and Gerald's conscience gave him smart twinges. He had not looked after his brother as he ought to have done, and as he now resolved he would do. But the next remarks of Harry (not quite unpardonably) swept away all his reflections on that subject for the present. His friend

was looking moodily into the fire, and at length, in rather a harsh, vehement tone observed—

“I’ve changed my opinion about that girl.”

“What girl?”

“I do think she is a splendid creature.” (Cloud clearing off.)

“Now I tell you what, Gerry, I rather think I could give up my life to her, to love and to cherish till death did us part—to work for and with her, all through this curious life, and so to walk with her right up to heaven; for I know if I kept by her side, I should go there.” (Face lighted up with enthusiasm.) “I can’t tell you what a—what a—well, what a divine influence seems to come over me when I talk with that child and look at her. You’ll think it rather strange, rather sudden,” he continued, hurriedly, “but I can’t help it. I can *not* live without loving some one of these pretty, gentle, innocent little darlings. God knows He has made us to love them. I do love her, Gerry, boy.”

“Well, I’m precious glad to hear it, Harry. But who *is* the fortunate she?”

During the few minutes that passed before Harry answered, and while he continued looking into the fire like one in a dream, Gerry was thinking what an infinite blessing it was that his friend should be thus giving himself up once more to a pure and ennobling attachment—thinking also very sadly on the chill which his own over-confident love for Leila had received the night before. But with the morning light had come a more hopeful view of the case. He had been thinking that perhaps he had judged the young maiden too hastily, and throughout the day her image had hardly ever been absent from his mind.

“I rather wonder now, my Gerry, you spoke so depreciatingly of her formerly.”

“I! Who on earth do you mean?” and his mind misgave him.

“Why, that uncanny little witch, as I think you once called her; and whom you always used to agree with me in despising; blind donkeys that we both were! Leila Featherstone, to be sure!”

Gerald’s heart—ah! well, no wonder people talk of the heart-ache and broken hearts, and so forth. Did you never feel that sharp pang, and then a dull, weary pain? Arlington never knew before how deeply he loved that girl, Harry’s admiration of her, of course, if possible, increasing his own. But he sat with his back to the light, and Harry was not quick to notice people’s countenances at any time. So he turned white, and squeezed one hand in the other till the blood started beneath the nails, without attracting observation. With an effort he managed to reply.

"Ah, no doubt she's a nice girl."

"Oh, you think so, do you?" replied Fortescue, with concentrated and sarcastic bitterness. "Confound it! Have you got rid of your old injustice to her just as far as *that*, and no further? Why then, Squire Gerry, I'd rather you'd stay where you were, and just call her 'uncanny' again at once."

Gerald gave a hard, forced laugh, and replied that no doubt she was an angel.

"She's a grand little creature, Gerry. What a soul that girl has got! and her great dark eyes tell you what a world full of love lies sleeping there! And then that exquisitely graceful figure, and that wonderfully delicate complexion." (A pause.) "You'll think it rather strange. I see you do. And for a long time, I honestly confess, I hated the sight of a woman. I couldn't bear to think of the sex *at all*, and almost vowed never to speak to one again." This was blurted out with immense vehemence. "But don't look so grave and dry, or I can't get on. Well then, gradually, you see, I felt that these women do govern our destinies; that we cannot grow up to what is called perfection without them: and there is no real purity and love without them. Then I longed once again, as I had done from the time I was that high, and with such desperate longing now, to know some one of womankind who would lift me up from the mire of sensuality and atheism, and put a new heart into me, and call out the true love which I felt I *could* give them—I had seen this girl, mind you, a year and a-half ago, for some weeks at the Lakes, and then again one day last summer at Brighton, and after that during several days at Neville Court, and each time, though I thought her sometimes, as you did, half possessed with an evil spirit, you know, I was struck—oh, Gerry, boy—," (profound sigh) "I was *so* struck with the appearance of something very pure and lofty, and yet caustic—you know what I mean, sometimes sarcastic—yet always so desperately bewitching. She hardly ever laughs, unless with her brother. Scarcely ever smiles above once a week; but oh, ye gods, *when* she does! Speak, speak, Gerry, Jeronimo, Jeremiah! Tell me, for your life, *should* I be wrong to try to win that girl's love? *May* I dare?" He sprang up, seizing Gerald's arm with one hand, and pressing the other against his own hot forehead.

It was a turning-point in Arlington's life. One of *his* "decisive battles" had then to be fought. Self, or self-sacrifice—that was the question. Harry had put a view of the case that naturally required consideration, which Gerald proceeded to give.

"Give me ten minutes to think about it, my boy," he replied.

During the silence that ensued, broken only by an occasional interjection from Gerald, expressive of interest and sympathy, just to save appearances, he ran over thoughts like these in his mind, while the deep undertone of pain in his heart kept groaning on, like the lower notes of an organ swell.

"She doesn't care much about me—I needn't be jealous—yet she did seem to like talking with me, and was very happy with me that one evening. But Harry is more likely to make her happy, I daresay; I don't quite understand her, perhaps he does. What wouldn't I give up to see him loving and loved by such a girl. It would be the saving of him, and perhaps she does care about him. I remember thinking how pleased she seemed to see him, and I remember, too, how she looked when—but then how she looked and listened to me, too, that night in Portland Place. Was there not a true marriage of souls then? Oh, heavens, did I not love her long, long before Harry cared two straws about her, and didn't she like me before she—but I can't hold a candle to him in so many things that attract a girl's love. And if he *can* win her what a blessing it would be to him. And if he should be again disappointed, why, I think—I think he'd go full tilt to the devil. Yes, yes, it's all clear now. God help him! and give her to him, and bless him,—and save him,—and help me."

The ten minutes ended.

"Do you think I've a chance, Gerry?"

"Yes; I do. I remember thinking how pleased she looked to see you last night."

"Did you really, Jacky? The gods be praised! Bless you;" and he grasped his friend's hand with a gripe that gave intense satisfaction to the friend. "I had another dance with her after you cut, and then a talk in a conservatory—oh, my boy, that was a talk!—and then she was whisked off by some lout of a fellow, and all became very flat and weary, and I sank into the blues, and doubted whether I would ever speak to her or to any woman, except Nelly, again, and was very thankful when my sister and Miss Tylney plaintively inquired if I were ready to retire. But oh! if she *could* love me—it would make a Christian man of me for ever. And yet, the more hope I feel, and the more madly in love with her I become, the more I keep thinking of Dartmoor, and saying to myself, 'Oh! the pity of it.' Gerry, Gerry, I'm not worthy of her—I'm *not* worthy of her. Wasn't it queer? I dreamt I was at Beachum last night, and she was standing there on the shore—white dress fluttering in the wind, and dark hair waving about her whiter neck. She turned towards me, with such a heavenly smile; and, mad with delight, I

was going to rush forwards, when something I had thought was a great rock on the beach, moved, and I saw it had a human face, and that face, oh! Gerry, can you not guess whose it was? My father's! It looked so sad and stern; and what I had taken for seaweed waving in the wind, was an arm motioning me back; and I thought she saw the face, and her countenance changed, and she shrank away from me. Oh, God! the misery of that moment, Gerald." The speaker drew a long breath. "Yet it was only a dream," he added. But the drops of perspiration stood on his forehead. "No, I am not worthy of her. I shall never have her." For one moment a wild and selfish rapture shot through Arlington's mind. In the next it was conquered. He was silent for a minute or two, and then murmured slowly, "Harry, I'll never believe that sin truly repented of, and thoroughly put away, shuts a man out of Heaven."

"No, no! it cannot. You're right, and Heaven bless *you*, old fellow. Say it again."

"And, Harry," continued Arlington, "don't you think a man may sometimes rise all the higher from having had a miserable fall?"

"I do! by all that's sacred, I do. You mean the reaction spurs him on to greater efforts and watchfulness."

"Only beware of another fall—"

"Do you think it possible, Gerald?" exclaimed he, indignantly.

"Not in your present state of mind, of course. But she might not return your—love—as ardently as you may wish—hindrances, misunderstandings may arise; and you'll find it harder work than ever now to keep straight."

"Ah! that's true—the Lord knows, and the devil knows, too, how infernally true that is. Well-a-day! whatever comes of it or of me, you have been a grand help to me, Arlington, in many ways, and I do thank you with my whole heart."

Gerald accepted these thanks—received them into the depths of *his* heart, and brooded over them, and refreshed himself therewith. He needed refreshment.

Harry called the next day on Mrs. Featherstone, at Wimbledon, in a strangely-mad humour, weary and wild, elated and depressed. Mrs. Featherstone thought he had taken leave of his senses—or was in a state with which Alfred was just beginning to acquaint her—while Adelaide, secure in her engagement, smiled blandly yet scornfully supreme. With Leila he scarcely got five words; but again their eyes had met, and he left the house more decidedly in love—more sad and enraged with himself, and more full of amazement at his former blindness concerning the sisters, than ever. He

went raving about Wimbledon Common, sighing to the winds, and pathetically calling on his "beloved little Leila" to accompany him forthwith to the "Islands of the Blest," wherever that may be.

Why should she not? Alas! she was darning her stockings, and could not conveniently leave them. But she was thinking about him for all that, and had been so happy while he was in the room that she could not realise the fact that he was actually going out of it, and that her mother had not asked him to stay to dinner. Then, as she felt the lingering pressure of his hand, and saw his melancholy, beseeching look, as he bade her good-bye, she longed to rush after him, and once again to give him words of comfort. She was not quite sure whether he was unhappy about Adelaide, or was thinking about herself—but knew she was unhappy about him, and sat down again to her stockings with moistened eyes, which fortunately Adelaide did not notice, but her mother did. However, she had soon sorrow enough of another description to occupy her troubled little mind.

Alfred was obliged to go daily to the counting-house, and his usually sweet temper was fast becoming soured, while his natural selfishness became increasingly predominant. His father having once been roused to fight, and conscious both of his own weakness and the strength of his enemies, kept the victory he had won by a continued display of harshness, and even petulance. He feared that if he gave an inch he might be driven to yield an ell. Little good, however, seemed to be coming of Alfred's forced visits to the City, and he and Leila sometimes held private confabs together, in which he poured out all his griefs and wrongs into her anxious ear.

"Oh, how I wish you would make it up again with Mr. Fortescue," she said one evening when he had retreated to the dining-room after tea, and she had followed him, on pretence of reading German together. "I can't help thinking he would do you good, Freddy. There's something so strong and healthy, I think, about his whole character."

"No, no," answered Alfred, gloomily. "He's a fine fellow, but he's too strict and fierce. Besides, he hates me."

"Oh, I'm sure he don't. If you had heard him speak of you the other day when he called——" and then she stopped, as if ashamed of her own eagerness.

"Did he though? I'm glad to hear it," replied Alfred, with considerable surprise and gratification. "Ah, well, we may be friends again some day, perhaps. I can't say. But he can do me no good, my Lily. Besides, he's up at Cambridge again."

"Well, there's his friend, Gerald Arlington. I'm sure the companionship of refined and—and—noble minds like his must be strengthening and useful to you."

"Gerry's a very good fellow, I've no doubt; but you know, Lilybell, I think he's weak." This barb went home. Now, if Alfred had analysed his idea of Gerald, and expressed it correctly, he would have said—"I think he's dreamy and romantic." And if he had, Leila would have been so much the more inclined to think tenderly of Gerald as now to think scornfully of him; and to have had her old impressions of him confirmed. But it was easier and pleasanter to say "weak." It helps to make one feel stronger oneself to call another person weak.

Before the brother and sister broke up their conclave, she whispered:—

"Dear Fred, may I say one more thing? I do so wish you would—take—less——"

"Wine?"

She nodded, and hastily added—"I heard Papa saying only yesterday what mischief you were doing yourself. Besides, it *is* so degrading."

"I know, you dear little vixen. I will try. Good night, Pettikin. God bless you."

"Try!" exclaimed his sister, with increasing ill-concealed and indignant scorn. "Ah, Freddy, I once heard Mr. Fortescue say, on hearing one of your Cambridge friends declare he must try to give up smoking—'Try! Why don't you *do* it?'" Then, seeing the cloud of mingled anger and distress which came over her poor brother's face, she gave him a remorseful kiss, and vanished.

CHAPTER XIX.

ARLINGTON, meanwhile, plunged into his tragedy again with desperate energy. In the wild play of imagination and the fictitious sorrows of the children of his fertile brain, he found temporary but effectual relief from the crushing blow that had fallen on him. And had he possessed that independent income, or that iron constitution which his father once spoke of, and had his undoubted

genius been well disciplined by severe study, he would probably have won a high place among the poets and thinkers of the day. As it was, he could only flounder blindly on for a time amid all the hindrances that beset him—something like a man in a sack-race at a country fair.

So then came the days when a journey taken by “young Arlington” to the docks was sometimes unaccountably and most mysteriously lengthened (to Mr. Bramble’s wondering annoyance and disgust) by the necessity for scribbling memoranda in out-of-the-way nooks and corners on Tower Hill, or on deserted quays—days when the Custom House terrace was visited to mould a sentence or to devise a scene—when Trinity Square was conscious of unwonted musings on stormful heroes and exquisite heroines, and even Billiter Square blushed for the poor clerk pausing beneath its gas-lamps. Days, also, when Mr. Grant, coming suddenly to look for missing letters in Gerald’s desk, would find scraps of blank verse and tragic “situations” in lieu of charter-parties and bills of lading; or when Mr. Bramble, not in the best of humours, rushing desperately to the hapless shipping clerk’s drawer, in his absence, would light—not upon the missing “Manifest”—but upon “Act I. Scene 4. Enter Albizzi, with enraged expression, &c., &c.”

Blame him not too severely nevertheless, stern Mr. Charter-party Ledger, merchant, ship-broker, or clerk. Blame him not, O Bramble! till thou, much-enduring mortal, hast known what it is to be labouring with thoughts and imaginations that crave (how passionately!) for utterance. But in addition to this, which is one of the strongest impulses man can feel, there was that noble thirst for Freedom, Beauty, Joy, for himself and for all men, which inspires the captive to dig through stone walls, and the patriot to bleed and die in striving for power to emancipate his country, to guide its destinies, and to lift it to a nobler life.

Gerald’s conscience as to the propriety of these proceedings was quieted by assurances that as his health did not suffer much (fictitious composition agreed with it better than Demosthenes), and as he got through his duties passably, he thought he might work on at least till his play was finished, and his erratic proceedings were vindicated by its triumphant success. But that conscience had been getting somewhat seared of late. The constant and deadly strife between his intellectual impulses and his enforced duties was not favourable to a healthy moral life. Mr. Grant and his father again interchanged anxious words now and then. The flattering hopes they had both been cherishing were being sadly nipped once more. But they finally agreed that they had better

content themselves, for the present, with watching the wayward youth. And Mr. Grant acknowledged that "young Mr. Gerald" was certainly much more efficient, on the whole, than he used to be; and "if not quite reliable in all matters of detail, he had rather an attractive persuasive way with masters of vessels, was useful on 'Change, and acceptable from his gentlemanly (though a trifle too excitable) demeanour with the mercantile aristocrats." "So we must make the best of it," continued Mr. Grant, with a chuckle, as he described the case to his wife and daughters, who, of course, especially the eldest, were greatly interested in the rather perplexing career of the high-bred, dreaming, poetical drudge, "and can only hope," added Mr. Grant, in conclusion, "our sucking Shakespeare will safely pass through the dramatic fever as he did through the measles and whooping cough. Ha, ha, ha!"

To Ned, "the knowing," and his select circle, the "poetic babe" was, of course, as amusing as "Tom of Bedlam" to a village crowd. But he benevolently promised his sisters to use his best endeavours "to keep Gerry out of scrapes, and train him in the way he should go—for," added he, in his knowingest way, "Gerry's a sort of fellow you don't meet with every day—one, too, that you can't help liking most deucedly, though he certainly is the rummiest chap that ever I did see! The chimpanzees at the Zoological Gardens, Nanny, are nothing to him! Play-writing in Leadenhall Street! Crickey! When his tragedy comes out at Drury Lane won't we go and laugh till we cry!"

* * * * *

An individual lay reclining languidly on the poop of a fine clipper-built East Indiaman, moored to the quay of the new large basin of the London Docks. Another individual, who had just stepped over the vessel's side, contemplated him pensively for a few minutes, and then addressed him thus:—

"What a rum chap you are, Arlington. Here have I been standing beside you full five minutes, and you have been knitting your brows, or clasping your hands despairingly, the greater part of the time, as if you didn't see me, and were going to drown yourself, and had nothing else to do."

"*Have* nuffin else to do. Waiting for Captain. Glad to see you all the same. What's the news? Allow me to introduce you to 'La belle Circassian;' that is the name we rejoice in here. Come and have a look at her. Splendid vessel."

"All right. What's she going to do?"

"We have chartered her, sir, to Sydney."

"I wish I were going in her"—and his eye ran admiringly over

the tall, graceful masts and spars, and up to the long streamer exulting in the fresh breeze—"Oh, golly! wouldn't it be just the thing? Cut the knot of all these infernal blackguard nuisances at once. But that cock won't fight. Governor won't hear of it. I've bored him for the last two months about letting me emigrate to New South Wales, and give me £1000 to buy stock. No good going without money. That wild life in the bush, Arlington," and the poor fellow's eyes sparkled, and he looked for the moment like his old handsome, innocent self, "driving cattle like mad—that would suit me to a T, and keep me out of all these devilries, my boy. But he won't hear of it. Besides," and he looked round with affected mystery, then continued in a lower tone, "I'll do better nor dat, Massa Arlington."

"What's in the wind now, I wonder?"

"Well—in confidence, then—I'm just going to cut the shop, and the governor, and the snug crib, and all—outright. And Leila cried and begged me so prettily and heart-breakingly to see you, and tell you where I was going to, before I finally vanished from the scene in thunder and lightning, and a storm of applause—I mean hisses and kisses—that I could do no less, though contrary to my resolution. So I picked my way down through those beastly streets, even unto here, where they told me, in Leadenhall Street, I should probably find you."

Leila, then, remembered him—looked to him to help her brother. He *would* help him.

"But what are you up to, man? You don't tell me that——"

"I'm a-going for to live in a garret—here it is," and he pulled out a direction card, "'Mrs. Stivens, No.—Elm Street, Clerkenwell.' That's the enclosure, and there I establish my studio, and start on the career of genius and of fame! Isn't that the right twang, O thou Shakesperian cove?"

"Have the powers that be consented then at last?"

"No, by George! Fairly *broke* with them! That's all." And he gave a short, nervous laugh. "Fact is, I saw it wouldn't do any longer. I must follow my genius, or walk the plank. Hell's waves gaping for me. But I'll baulk them, Captain. And oh, ye gods! but I do love my brush. I've begun a fancy piece. You'll come and see it, eh? Fare thee well. 'If for ever, still for ever, &c., &c.'" And he turned to depart.

"Excuse me—one point—if not impertinent. How on earth do men manage to set up for themselves? I'm personally interested. I mean how as to the cash. Governor makes no allowance, I suppose?"

"Not a stiver. I've got a hundred or two of my own, which will last me a twelvemonth; but I shall soon pay my way. Far better live so, Arlington, than go on as I've been doing the last few years. You'll drop in now and then? I shall be glad to see a face or two of the old set; but mind, as you value your honour, you mustn't let a soul know where I've run to earth. Keep it dark, and good-bye."

"Good-bye. Tell your sister I'll be sure and ferret you out."

"Shan't see her, or any of them, for a long time, I expect. She and mother musn't, and father and Adelaide wouldn't, come. I'm sorry a good deal for mother, and even a bit for the old boy. She, the mother, takes on so, as my Gyp used to remark of his greengrocery 'parient' when her babies died. But I've cut up uncommonly rough, and must take the consequences. I'm a deadly sight more grieved about Leila; but she'll get comforted somehow. Good-bye."

He swung himself up into the ship's chains, sprung on to the quay with his old gaiety, and was soon out of sight.

Reflections.—It by no means follows, we suppose, that every father who finds that his son has a great dislike for business, ought to let him go to Australia, or become a professional artist, should he evince strong proclivities, or even genius, in that direction. But perhaps it does follow that if a father has failed to bring up his son wisely, so that he can be brought to bear the yoke faithfully in business-drudgery, and unexciting usefulness, he had far better let him follow the strong bent of the said son's desires and capabilities than keep him in harness, against which he persistently and fiercely rebels. The latter course is very likely to land the young gentleman in both a moral and social ditch.

"Will he indeed do *that*?" mused Gerald after Featherstone had left him. "Leave home, and friends, and his sister, and a certain competency, probably wealth? resist his father's will; work away in a dingy garret? and all because he feels that Painting is his true vocation? And shall I do less for the highest cause that can demand the sacrifice of all that makes men value life? Does this miserable world of ours need less sacrifices for its mending than the pursuit of Art and Fame? Have I not a warning here?" And he seemed to hear an indignant upbraiding voice sternly bidding him to go and do likewise.

We all suffer sometimes from strange delusions. But they are not always what the *world* supposes.

CHAPTER XX.

"SCHILLER, in his youth, was a prisoner and a slave, but he burst his fetters by a single tragedy. I may not dare to hope that I can ever come within a million miles of his genius and success, but surely it were not so difficult to equal 'The Robbers.'"

This thought had been haunting Gerald ever since his Scottish tour. He believed that if he, too, could write a successful tragedy, his father's aversion to his renouncing business and entering on a literary career would be overcome, or, at all events, that he should be able to support himself in that case by his pen, and would have a right to choose his own career. But Alfred Featherstone's decisive renunciation of the parental home had reminded him that a legacy from his grandmother of £100, bequeathed when he was a child had become £200, when he lately received formal possession of it on coming of age, and that if one young man could find that sum ample provision for two years, why, another with simpler tastes might certainly do the same, and so work out his schemes for the redemption of society by means of £200, combined with the divine influences of Poetry and Art. Then conscience pleaded that it was nobler to work on bravely where his father had placed him, doing his duty patiently, unambitiously. * * *

It was the old terrible conflict raging all over again—"What is my duty?"

Could he but have completed his tragedy according to his ideal standard, without leaving his situation, all might yet have been well. Can he not do so? His will was strong; his purpose fixed and resolute. Desperately he strove, night after night, to write worthily up to his really fine conceptions.

* * * * *

It was long past midnight. All was silent in Hartland House. But the young poet, who had been that evening to call on Alfred Featherstone, and had found him working away full of enthusiasm, was still at his desk trying to write—but all in vain. At length he rose with a groan and wearily paced the room, pressing his throbbing temples and dejectedly murmuring—

"Wie einst mit flehendem Verlangen
Pygmalion den Stein umschloss. . . ."

*"As once with passionate desire
Pygmalion the stone embraced. . . ."—*Die Idealen*. Schiller.

"Ah! *he* was rewarded; but the cold marble awakens not to *my* embrace. Thus that weird, fickle sylph I once so worshipped—the more fool I for my pains—turned disdainfully away when I spoke of *this* beloved idol" (and he clutched his half-written drama fiercely). "Even so now it coldly, cruelly, refuses—

‘ Zu athmen, zu erwärmen
 An meiner Dichterbrust.’” *

He laid the crumpled manuscript down again, and tenderly smoothed it; then sat down by the half-extinguished fire, very miserable.

For the fact is, the young Deliverer of Humanity had begun to feel of late that as with his former studies so now with his play-writing, his health was again giving way; while even at the best he saw no real good would come out of night-work, especially at the close of a long day in the City. He had tried early rising, but either he couldn't wake early enough, or was very sleepy if he did, or weak and hungry, or he lost half his time in lighting his fire, or just as he had got into the full glow of composition, breakfast time arrived, and he must soon be off to town. In short, he knew he was now, for the most part, writing rubbish, and that there was no redemption either for himself, or for humanity at large, coming in that direction. Just then his eye happened to fall on a roll of paper which he had brought with him from London. He unrolled it, and fastened it against the wall. It was *the* portrait—the head of one mightier than Schiller (as most, not all, regard him)—a face that moved him so deeply when he first saw it in a shop-window, that he turned away, slightly faint and giddy. But *then*, it had seemed to overpower him only by the glorious inspiration and hope with which it filled him. Now, poor fellow, he gazed at it, and turned away sick at heart from very different emotions. When he looked on Goethe's magnificent face, and thought how that great man had gone on through life, receiving all sorts of help at the most needful times, and bravely wrestling with all the hindrances and foes that would, nevertheless, have otherwise crushed him; calmly subduing all things into æsthetic nourishment for his soul; the 'pabulum' of his splendid (though miserably unequal) career—when he looked at him there, calm, smiling, victorious—throned on the admiration of the ages—wearing the eternal crown of power and fame—"Der Ruhm mit seinem goldnen Kranz"—which he, poor, vain-glorious weakling, so madly pined for—his fortitude at length gave way, and, weakened by over-work and disappointment,

* "To breathe and warm into life on my poet-breast."

he flung himself, in a paroxysm of misery, on his knees, clasping his hands upon the blotted manuscript of his beloved play like a lover bending over his mistress' bier.

A strange, sad sight for one who had entered noiselessly, and looked down on her son with scarce less sorrow in her own heart. A very sorrowful sigh, and then a hollow cough, made him start to his feet, exclaiming, "Mother!"

"I could not rest, dear," she said, hurriedly, "while I knew you were so unhappy. I have often heard you walking about, Gerald, long after we were all gone to bed, and I couldn't bear it any longer." Taking his hand, and kissing his dry, aching eyes, she drew him to a seat beside her, and they sat together a few minutes silently. Her eyes wandered over the manuscript on his desk.

"My poor boy, what is to be the end of all this? Aunt Carry told us a year ago that you were quite reconciled to the counting-house, and would try and become all your father so anxiously looked forward to."

"I *have* tried, mother—desperately. And I did give my whole mind to business, and put aside all my studies; but, you know, I couldn't help *thinking*, and more and more I felt a desire, which would give me no rest, to try and write something that would get me influence—and make people care to listen to me—and, so give me power to raise them—you know. . . ." His voice faltered, and then presently he spoke of how Alfred Featherstone had given up everything to devote himself to Art, living on little more than bread and water in a garret, as he had seen him that evening; and then he exclaimed, "Mother! shall I do less for what seems to me a far higher purpose? I *cannot* finish this play, living as I am now. There's not a chance of my ever working out my purpose, unless I get out of this miserable mill-horse drudgery which my father has put me to. Now, look here, dearest mother, this is what I've made up my mind to: to leave home altogether, and live on my own money, till I can earn my livelihood by writing, unless my father consents to my giving up the counting-house, and likes me still to live at home for the present till I have made my position in another way. Indeed, indeed, mother, this *is* my duty—I have tried hard to learn what I *ought* to do—and I am as sure that this is the call I must answer, as that"

"But dearest Gerald," said his mother, hurriedly, "only a few months ago, you know, you were just hinting to me your hopes—regarding—Leila Featherstone. How can you expect——"

"Mother, that dream is over! You saw more truly than I did; and even were there tenfold the chance for me—Harry Fortescue

loves her as much as I do, and I wouldn't for worlds hinder——” Again he couldn't finish.

“Well, but my dear boy,” faltered out his mother, trying to keep down her tears, “if you could but settle quietly to business for a few years, you might certainly then have a home of your own, with *some* true wife who would make you happy when we are gone, and then you could have quite enough time for literary recreation and composition.”

But Gerald interrupted her, vehemently exclaiming—

“Mother, mother, do *you* tempt me? Do *you* not care that I should live for higher ends than these poor, common objects—getting a fortune and a wife? You *know* that if I give myself now to business, I shall never be able to do anything else. And have not you—oh! mother, was it not you who first made me long to live for something nobler than most men care about? Did not *you* make me, even as a boy, long for the sympathy—the honour—which crown noble work—for the loving ——” “Admiration” was the word on his lips, but not even to his mother, no, not even to himself, could he bear to confess the passionate craving he still felt for that heavenly-tinted bubble—FAME.

And Mrs. Arlington knew only too well how intensely she still cherished the hope of seeing her son famous; but, at least, she had led him some way on the right path to reach the divine *Civitas Dei*—the true “Kingdom of God”—if he had not entered it; and there was, therefore, a great blessing in store for her, then, and for her son hereafter. For as in deep dejection the poor lady was giving Gerald a tearful good-night kiss, she said, in a trembling voice, “But my dear, dear boy, one thing—in all your troubles, you won't forget Him, who always loves you.”

“No, no, mother, you have taught me to trust Him, and to come to Him. I've never given up that, and hope I never shall. And, dear mother, you have taught me some other things too—of purity and manliness. Thank God and you for that. God bless you, mother.”

These were very sweet words for the poor lady's aching heart.

“But what can be done?” she asked, as she wiped her eyes and returned Gerald's grateful kiss. “Your father is not the wealthy man he once was. He cannot support you in a literary career.”

“But if I can support myself——”

“Your health and strength are giving way already.”

“That is because I have to work at night. Give me the day. Give me only three months entirely to myself, and you shall see.”

A long pause.

"If I can persuade your father to give you three months holiday, and Mr. Grant agrees, and you finish your tragedy, will you let the result decide your subsequent course in life?"

"Yes," replied Gerald, with immense energy.

"And if it be—a failure—will you then give up this bright, but, perhaps, most mistaken dream, dearest, of a literary life?"

"Yes, mother, yes. I do not promise that I will remain the rest of my days in business; but I will not be a burden upon my father. But it *may* succeed, mother." And he looked up at her with such a wistful look, that she could only say, through her tears—

"I pray God it may, dear. What would I not give to see you," she added, with a wistful smile, "crowned, my boy—like Petrarch. Good-night."

As she left the room, the new hope that was filling her son's mind of the happy effect of her influence with his father, was giving way to a dismal fear. During their conversation Gerald had been too much occupied about himself to notice his mother's pale cheeks and sunken eyes; but when she was going, and all his old boyish love for her came back, a painful doubt, which had once or twice before occurred to him, concerning her own state of health, took possession of him, and even in his dreams he was haunted by gloomy visions.

Mr. Arlington had long been anxious on the same score, and when he heard his wife, whom he loved so tenderly, pleading with all a mother's zeal on behalf of her poor boy, he had no power to resist, and gave as a boon to her what he never would have yielded to the solicitations of his son. Moreover, apart from the question of his wife's health, Stephen Arlington, Merchant and "Director," was very happy and hopeful now with regard to business and his great engineering enterprises. The Baltic trade had improved a little. The London and Birmingham Railway was rapidly overcoming innumerable obstacles, and advancing to a proud, triumphal close. The Grand Junction was uniting Birmingham and Liverpool, through Warrington, with like magnificent energy; and, to crown the dreams of *his* life, an Atlantic Steam Navigation Company had actually been formed, and himself placed as chairman at its head. This was indeed a responsible, and by no means an enviable, post, but full of stirring interest.

Many of the ablest scientific and professional men shook their heads, or launched into fierce invective against the ridiculous—the disgraceful, because most dangerous—folly of attempting to send steamers 3000 miles without a chance of coaling on the way.

One of the cleverest of scientific professors proved to demonstra-

tion, in lectures and in print, that the thing was utterly impossible.

But Mr. Arlington and his company stood by their great engineer bravely. Two splendid vessels were built and fitted up with mighty engines. The first completed was launched on her untried and perilous voyage amid hopes and prayers, fears and ridicule; and the very day that the last proof-sheets of the eminent Professor's book came wet from the printer's, showing the absolute impossibility of the steamer's reaching America, the news came and spread like wildfire through the City, that the "Queen of the West" had arrived at New York in triumph. Mr. Arlington then, like one or two other people, felt he had not lived quite in vain.

And then, into the midst of this brief triumphal hour of his life, there stalked the gloomy business once again of "poor Gerald's obstinate folly," as he viewed it; and for which he now believed there was no remedy but to let the infatuated boy take his own course; and, if one more concession, and then one final attempt at stern coercion should fail, nothing was left for his misguided son but untold evil for the rest of his days.

Mr. Arlington little thought there was a thousand-fold more reason for being anxious on his youngest son's account than even on Gerald's. Richard Arlington appeared outwardly to be going on in a sufficiently respectable and steady way to satisfy any ordinary parental heart, according to the usual standard of propriety. Gerald, however, could not help seeing a good deal deeper into his brother's character and way of life; although, from Richard's being established in lodgings, as aforesaid, near the St. ——— Hospital, they were not thrown much together.

Dick used often to come down, however, on Saturdays and Sundays, to Hartland; and then Gerald (trying to avoid assuming "elder-brother" airs), put in a good word or two, ending once or twice with pretty strong remonstrance and entreaties. But he was vexed to find how little influence he seemed to have over Master Richard. The time for that appeared to be irrecoverably lost—gone with the days of beagles, and boating, and bolstering matches. He had done his best, after recovering from the shock of his disappointment with regard to Leila Featherstone, to lead his brother in a better way. But the companions of the latter, and all the worst influences of a medical student's life in those days, were urging fifty words in Richard's ear for one that Gerald could plead; and, amid all his own troubles, the elder brother bitterly fretted over the evil symptoms which were manifested, every now and then, beneath a fair outside.

However, Gerald sometimes thought that perhaps he might be too exacting and fastidious. Moreover, Richard always seemed impressed by his brother's remonstrances at the time, and promised well for the future. The young gentleman's great object was to avoid being bored, or in any way restrained; but he also had a certain amount of sincere regard for his parents and brother, and so he promised fair, and Gerald kept hoping and expecting better things.

The day after that midnight talk with his mother, Gerald gave Mr. Grant notice he should like to leave his office as soon as might be convenient to that gentleman, and was told there was a very hopeful young man longing for the situation who would be able to come certainly in a month's time—probably before—and that Gerald might consider himself at liberty as soon as his successor appeared.

"Ned, the Knowing," was overwhelmed with surprise, though not quite with sorrow. The merchant's son treated him a little too cavalierly to satisfy Ned's sense of his own importance, while "the sucking Shakespeare," as he always called Gerry behind his back, was not an agreeable colleague, it must be confessed, in a purely business point of view. There was more sorrow among the softer sex in Gower Street at this final break-down in the family relations; but while Annie Grant mourned over it with silent constancy, Bessy and her mother welcomed the hopeful and agreeable successor to that place at their table and in their regards, formerly occupied by Gerald Arlington.

The next day Mr. Arlington, to whom Mr. Grant had communicated Gerald's request, told his son, before he left for town, that if he liked to live at home till he had finished his play, he was welcome to do so. Should it succeed, and he found he could make a livelihood by literature, well and good. If not, he, Mr. Arlington, would get him a situation on the railway, or in some office where the work would be light, and over by 4 o'clock. "But, Gerald," he added austere, and with some solemnity, "you must earn your own living. I have neither the will nor the power to earn it for you." The man of business would have slaved all his days, and nights too, to keep that son of his in luxurious literary leisure if he could thereby have kept the light in his wife's eyes, and not have quite ruined his boy. But the concession he had now made to her entreaties, under the anxiety he felt at her failing health, was the utmost his conscience would allow.

Of course, Gerald sent his friend at Cambridge a full account of what had been transpiring—of his determination to leave home, if necessary, and to fling himself entirely on his own scanty resources. Before long he received the following characteristic reply:—

CHAPTER XXI.

[HARRY FORTESCUE TO GERALD ARLINGTON.]

"Caius Coll., March 10/33.

"So you've gone and done it at last, friend Gerry. Well, I suppose it's all right, and I ought to congratulate you on your 'emancipation' from the 'Leadenhall Street bonds.' I've no doubt you are very jolly, and in a fine frenzy rolling, and all that sort of thing; but, somehow it don't seem to me quite the tune. It is too pleasant, I'm afraid, to be right. I don't mean as to *now*, because I know you need and deserve a holiday, and you would say you are only preparing for a much harder life by-and-bye. But I can't see that at any time a man can be doing his duty fairly in the world if his chief occupation is writing dramas, novels, or even poetry. I can't see how you are to be brought fairly into contact with the rough facts of life, and do the stern working and fighting of the world in that way. I don't believe in Goethe myself, what little I know of him; and I fancy he would have been a much greater poet as well as a far finer fellow generally, if he had had to rough it a little more, and had had a regular profession of some kind. Playing at being a Minister of State in a little trumpery dukedom like that of Saxe-Weimar wasn't half enough. I have read somewhere, and it seems to me true, that men of thought have always been greater for being also men of action. However, I've bored you with all this often enough before, so I'll shut up. Only first let me say one thing, Gerry. When men think so very much about helping others and doing good, as you do, isn't there danger of their neglecting themselves—I mean their own characters,—of becoming, perhaps, brilliant writers or eminent philanthropists, but poor sort of *men*? I may be talking stuff, and, if you think so, put it down to my ignorant zeal. But, if it is very wise, as I rather opine it is, credit that admirable Aunt Carry of yours therewith, for I could almost swear I learnt it of her! . . . As to myself I can't say I am at all at ease. As Freddy Featherstone remarked of himself to you, 'I can't read and I won't *row*.' Well, I do read medically pretty hard now and then, but I'm not well in body or mind; though I don't *row*, I do row—*i.e.*, boat. But I do long to be out in the world, doing something useful—real, hard, useful work. I don't care much what it be, though I still hanker very much after the pill-boxes. But I feel bored to death up here—and, alack! sometimes I don't seem to care a rush even for some one—

you know who. If I could only go straight to the old boy and get his leave, and carry her off at once, and set up in a nice little practice—ah! wouldn't I be merry and good! But dragging on in this miserable way, never seeing her, not even a line now and then interchanged—not hearing even whether she really cares an old brooch for me—ugh! Why, for aught I know she may be flirting away right and left at this moment, and be over head and ears in love with some finnickin' doll from the clubs, who wouldn't value her half as much as he does his horse and tiger. I can't stand it, Jacky, and it don't pay. But, *jam sat*. You've wisely kept out of all such bobberies, and that at least shews your wisdom.

"Bye, bye; I've lots more to say, but I can't write. I mean to run down at Easter.

"Ever yours,

"HARRY FORTESCUE.

"Excuse such a stupid, dull affair. I *am* seedy, and that's the fact."

"He doesn't care for her," cried Gerald, bitterly. "No, not one-thousandth part as much as she deserves! Couldn't I have gone on for years if I had as much reason as I know, and as he knows he has to believe she cares for him! He doesn't know what real love is. Oh, Lady Leila!—still beloved! was it for this I gave you up?" Then he champed and stamped, and drove down his grief into the crucible of his own imagination, where his tragedy was heaving and bubbling, like precious metal and dross in a furnace, poured out the glowing mass in the mould of some half-dozen passionate scenes, and finally wrote Master Harry a letter which made that young gentleman exclaim, "Bless me! Perhaps the man had once been smitten himself. But he certainly had given her up, if he was ever in love with her. I well remember his saying she used to make him feel as the Scotch say you do when a witch or a water-wraith comes near you. Ye gods! Still, anyhow, as he says pretty correctly, I *am* a confounded old sinner."

Easter came, and with it Harry Fortescue turned up among the gay throngs of Portland Place and Harley Street. Gerald left the course quite clear to him. But these fine assemblies were never to Fortescue's taste. He would have given worlds for a quiet hour's walk with "the little Featherstone" (as he caught himself irreverently remarking) in a shady lane; but, as it was, he felt utterly out of sorts with everybody and everything, and would have been thankful if any one of the ridiculous coxcombs he met buzzing

about would have knocked him down, and not run away till he got up again. Poor Leila couldn't understand him—wasn't half as happy with him as she expected. She felt, indeed, deeply sensible of the unselfish nobleness and strength of character, combined with a child-like simplicity, which shone so clearly through the poor fellow's tumultuous and somewhat turbid atmosphere. She rejoiced more than ever in his impassioned thirst for an "Order and Peace in the Universe," which he was certainly far from having attained to himself. Her powerful imagination invested him with a thousand heroic qualities, and she loved to be near him during those rabid, blind-giant like moods of his. For there, also, she was in entire sympathy with him. And it was an immense excitement, mixed with a grim sense of fun, to see him raging like a chained lion in the fetters of conventional decorum and social slavery. Sometimes, when he was supremely fierce and indignant with the follies of the world, she broke out into one of those merry little laughs which he had characterized as being so overwhelmingly captivating and rare. No wonder poor Harry was more madly in love with her than ever, and no wonder she enjoyed a walk which he managed to get with her once or twice, and then was momentarily but intensely happy.

Nevertheless, for all that, she sighed when alone, to remember that he hadn't talked much on subjects which really and deeply interested her. He evidently cared little for art, literature, poetry, music; nor even for religion, except in a conventional way, she thought. Then she shrunk from his vehement self-assertion and imperious dogmatizing, which seemed so impatient of all opposition.

He feared unconsciously for her own individuality and liberty of thought, and felt, at such times, a decided antipathy to him on account of his strong will, and defiant, obstinate ways. So that while greatly attracted towards him by one set of influences, she was just as strongly repelled from him by another. In fact she was too much like him in certain respects really to harmonize with him, at all events in this stage of their acquaintance, though, as we have seen, she could easily have been drawn into accepting him, had the parental influences been propitious, and had he urged a persevering suit. But at the very times when he was most eagerly striving to please and interest her he was crunching up her favourite ideas, and smashing her pet sentiments, and often putting her into as wild and painful a commotion as he was being tossed about in himself. That calm strength, and cheerful, hopeful tone of mind, which had once formed one of his greatest charms in Leila's eyes were gone. He seemed to have lost the key of his life. Then

when he thought he saw that she disliked him, or felt sure he had offended her, a crawling, venomous jealousy of Gerald crept into his mind. He cursed himself a dozen times for this hateful feeling, but it would keep twining round his heart. Once he asked her "what she thought of his friend?" Now Leila had heard of Gerald's leaving Leadenhall Street, and had also heard him described as a weak, sentimental, changeable young gentleman, shirking hard honest work and duty. He had never called on them since the Wimbledon dance; in fact, evidently kept out of her way. And, moreover, when she heard that young Mr. Arlington had thus given up his proper calling, as she naturally supposed it to be, she began to fear his romantic tendencies were conquering his sense of duty,—to apprehend that, after all, he had been leading her somewhat astray with his æsthetic chatter, and to think, half sorrowfully, half satirically, of the would-be poet. So when Harry asked the above question, as they sat on a bench in Kensington Gardens one sunny Sunday afternoon, listening, with a vast number of fashionable folks, to the band of the Coldstream Guards (the fashionable Sunday amusement of those days, shared with a visit to the Zoological Gardens), she looked up at her companion's hard, rugged features and compressed mouth, and answered with a quiet smile, "I think him very interesting, very clever, and—rather weak." The slightly contemptuous tone in which her words were uttered sent a very natural, though not exactly a brotherly, thrill of delight through Harry's heart. "Yes," he slowly responded; "he *is* weak;" and then he drew a long breath of immense relief. But the words he had uttered came back to him in the darkness of the following night like accusing spirits, and the poor fellow with all his nobleness and all his devilry contending within him, moaned aloud to the bed-curtains, and muttered, "I ought to be hung for saying so. I *know* better than that." Then he remembered how young Featherstone had once said something of the kind, and he had answered fiercely, "Weak! Well, he's knocked me over more than once, both physically and metaphysically—and, let me tell you, it takes some strength to do that. But Gerry's a modest party, and his strength is so quiet that blind beetles like you can't see it."

He thought of all this in the gloomy darkness, and cursed himself for a liar and a traitor. But this talk with Leila in Kensington Gardens had been the last opportunity he should have of seeing her for months. He was going back to Cambridge the next day; and the enthusiastic soul, the liquid yet flashing eyes, the blush-rose-tinted cheek, and the lithe, beautiful figure of this young girl,

were overpowering. She had let him take her hither and thither on that sunny afternoon, wherever he would, in the excitement of the moment, to escape the crowd, or to avoid detached loiterers; sometimes pretending to listen to the music, then striving impatiently to shun it, until he felt the time was come when he *must* speak, or go and drown himself. And so he rushed into a glowing eulogium on the medical profession, and declared in incoherent terms his belief "that he could make something of it, and was determined he would—and if he worked on and rose in it—might he hope?" All his strong, impetuous nature and will—all his vehemence, passionate longings for a goodness, a beauty, a blessedness of which he had so often and so ardently dreamed—all his fiery yet tender, loving desire to bless this angelic creature, were concentrated in that little sentence—"Might he hope?"

But to poor Leila the words were like the sudden yawning of a precipice at her feet. In the singular simplicity and childlike freshness of her character she had gone on just as she had done with Gerald Arlington, enjoying companionship with gifted minds and noble natures, never asking herself whither it would all lead; and suddenly she found this great, strong, impetuous being—so enthusiastic in some things, so scornfully sceptical in others—so arbitrary and yet so fascinating, was thinking of marriage—actually thinking whether she would be his wife. In the tumult of the most agitating, and at the same time conflicting emotions that had ever filled her mind, she could have burst into a passionate flood of tears, and with great difficulty restrained herself. But utter a word she could not, nor move a limb. A sudden silence—a silence that went like the chill of a dead man's fingers on Harry's heart. It was a moment of agony to him. He thought she was mortally offended. Young men in love often expect women, if they reciprocate their attachment at all, to be as impassioned and unrestrained as themselves. Every tinge of colour had left the maiden's cheek. The lovely little witch was hard to catch. In the great effort of self-restraint she looked cold and hard; and at length rising, she remarked—

"I think we had better go to mamma."

That lady and Mr. Featherstone were evidently preparing to betake themselves to their carriage. Mr. Featherstone, who as well as his wife had been uneasy at the prolonged *tête-à-tête* between the young people, came to meet them, looked from his daughter to Harry, with a curious mixture of suspicion, vexation, and kindness, placed Leila in the carriage, and whispering to Harry to wait a minute, turned to look for Adelaide. That radiant beauty soon

appeared in splendid costume, walking with the gentleman on one side who in a few weeks was to become her husband, and his father on the other. Mr. Featherstone handed the young couple in, saying "That he was going to walk home with Sir John." The carriage drove off. Sir John conversed meanwhile with an acquaintance, and Mr. Featherstone turned to Harry, who stood waiting like a culprit going to be hanged.

"Mr. Fortescue, I have a sincere regard and esteem for you; but in my time it was usual to say a word or two to fathers before talking about such things as I suspect you have been broaching to my daughter. She is a great deal too young, you know, Mr. Fortescue——" he stopped, pained by the expression of suffering on Harry's face. He knew he had suffered somewhat from a former disappointment in regard to Adelaide, and he would have liked to console him a little. So after a moment's pause, he continued—

"At the same time, my dear Sir, considering what we all owe you,—if—your uncle intends—that is, if you have any reasonable prospect in the course of a few years of a living, why—at the same time, you know, my dear Sir, I can't *recommend* such long engagements. I don't think they are good; and you yourself are very young. But—ahem, is there a probability—such a thing as a family living, for instance?"

"Mr. Featherstone, I *do* love your daughter. I love her as in my soul I believe she deserves to be loved; but I doubt if she has the slightest desire to reciprocate that——" He couldn't get any further. "Oh, don't be too sure," said Mr. Featherstone, feeling very awkward between his kindly sympathy for a deserving young man in such evident distress, to whom his son owed his life, and ambitious designs, as well as paternal consideration for his favourite daughter.

"I have no chance, Sir," continued Fortescue, by a strong effort, "of any such presentation as you refer to. I intend devoting myself to the medical profession."

"The deuce you do!" exclaimed her papa, all his conventional decorum fairly upset. "But then your uncle will make you a handsome allowance till you come into his property?"

"He will give me nothing, and leave me nothing, Sir, if I do not take orders."

"So!" The old gentleman gasped for breath. All his love and consideration for his little Leila rushed to the top of the tide. "And you actually have had the presumption, Sir, to think of engaging the affections of a young lady? Why, Mr. Fortescue,"

and he looked at the hapless suitor from top to toe, "it will be ten or fifteen years at the very earliest before you can pass through the requisite course of training and be in possession of sufficient means to support a wife and family."

"I have about £150 a-year of my own, Sir." But he knew his doom was sealed. The look of ineffable scorn with which this mention of £150 was received, and the glance of irritable indignation, were quite enough. Harry turned on his heel and was striding away, when Mr. Featherstone exclaimed, "Stop! we must not part thus; I do feel a very sincere regard, Sir,—perhaps you may think better of your intention to give up the Church—perhaps your uncle——" But Harry only very slightly touched the proffered hand and marched off.

"Very singular young man," thought the agitated father. "He saved our poor boy once—but to very little good purpose, I fear. The wretched lad's wild oats take a long while sowing. Eh, dear, it's a troublesome world—very——. What! give up £2000 a year rather than enter holy orders! Wonderful! . . . Hope I haven't kept you waiting, Sir John."

"Don't mention it," answered the complaisant baronet. "Why, Featherstone," he added, "What a charming young lady your youngest daughter is growing. She'll be as dangerous as her eldest sister, I suspect."

"I'm highly flattered, Sir John. We ought to be much obliged to our daughters, I'm sure, when they bring us such valued alliances as this with your esteemed family. But ah! they are sadly perplexing treasures—sadly perplexing—yes."

[HARRY FORTESCUE TO LEILA FEATHERSTONE.]

"Great Ormond St., March /

"I cannot leave London without daring to send you one line, to pray you to pardon me, and to confess that I did wrong. I beg you to forget wholly my mad conduct; and if you are spoken to about it by your father and mother, pray tell them what I have now said.

"I never thought of its being wrong till your father spoke to me afterwards. Pray forgive me. May I ask you for just a line to say you do—and that you will try not to think of me with anger, or as a man devoid of honour? I will not intrude upon you again till I have earned the right. It will be years before I shall have a right to speak to anyone as I did to-day to you. But I never shall so speak to anyone else while you remain as you are. Do not think I want to bind you in the slightest degree by saying this. God in Heaven knows I do not. He knows I only wish to see you happy

and beloved as deeply as He can make you—as with His help I thought I could make you ; and as, in truth, you well deserve to be. Once more, forgive me. Farewell.

“H. F.”

It cost him some hours during a sleepless night to concoct this epistle. Perhaps it took Leila Featherstone longer to answer it thus :

“I thank you very sincerely for your letter. I thank you for writing one that I could show my mother without fear and without more pain than I had felt before. And I thank you—oh, how much—for all you have felt towards me. I cannot say more. I have very much enjoyed making your acquaintance, and am sorry it is now better we should not meet. I shall always feel deeply grateful to you on my dear brother’s account. But I know that you do not ask for gratitude. Yes, I *am* too young to think of anything else. I do not know—I am not sure that I *ever* could give more. But it is a long time to look forward to.

“Let me add this, Mr. Fortescue, I never would take such love as you offered me unless I could give all mine in return.

“Believe me, gratefully,

“L. F.”

No, she could not write that which she was going to do mechanically—“Yours—” and with a start and a sigh, and almost a cry, she just hurriedly closed the letter. When it was all over, the reaction came with bitter crying and head-ache. But this too passed away, and she went back to her daily duties and studies. During the ensuing weeks she moved about pale and quiet, and felt sometimes very fierce, and at others very sad ; but at least five years older, and considerably wiser.

CHAPTER XXII.

“ONE, two, three! Capital! Miss Grant has hit the gold!” exclaimed Fanny Rivers, clapping her hands. “We have beaten them by sixteen! Bravo! Miss Nancy. Play up, band,—‘See the conquering hero comes!’ Crown her brows with laurel! Make way for the Queen of the May!” And the laughing girl burst into

snatches of song; and dancing around her victim, flung sprays of lilac and laburnum upon her path, and made graceful but futile efforts to compel her to submit to have her chesnut locks covered with a wreath of laurel.

The admiring spectators, themselves all armed with bows and arrows, consisted of Ellen Fortescue and her aunt, Lady Baines; Miss Tylney, the two Miss Grants, Leila Featherstone, two young ladies from a neighbouring mansion, and a very pale, pensive London governess, come down for fresh air and loving sympathy, both of which she always found, winter and summer, at Neville Court, in great abundance.

"I consider the shooting this afternoon has been superb," remarked Miss Fortescue, with gay *empressement*.

"So do I," responded Fanny, very vivaciously, while she executed a *pas seul* to her own warbling, "and I account for it entirely on the self-evident fact that there are no horrid men-creatures here. Tira la, tira la, la, la, la!—Trab, trab, trab!"

"I declare you are like a ridiculous mischievous piece of swan's-down, you naughty, frolicsome Fan," cried Nelly, at some further vagaries of that young lady's.

"Thistledown, my dear," cried Fanny. "You don't know how I plague my acquaintances!"

"But I do."

"Ladies, tea and coffee and a syllabub await us on the bowling-green. Let the victor lead the way," added Miss Fortescue, "and Miss Rivers is requested to wait upon the company, for her sins, singing at intervals."

"Oh, that *will* be charming!—won't I play you all manner of tricks. There's a squirrel! I vow I'll have it."

A very happy party they were, under the shade of the great oaks. The Grants had taken a house near Dorking for the summer months, and Fanny Rivers was on a visit to them. Leila had been so warmly pressed to come and stay a month at Neville Court by Miss Fortescue, that her parents noticing at last her evident depression and want of health, which she had long tried to conceal, gave their consent, on the understanding that the dangerous brother would not be asked there. They gave it reluctantly, for their home now was rather desolate. Alfred self-exiled, Adelaide married, Leila moping. "Whatever is the world coming to," thought Mrs. Featherstone.

The shadows were lengthening on the broad soft turf and the fair archers were strolling towards the house. As they passed the targets Fanny removed one of them, and putting herself in its place, exclaimed—

"Now Lily dear, now's your time! String your bow and speed your shaft. Fancy me that charming he. Here's my heart—quick, make it smart. Why! dost thou turn away, my loved and lovely one? Why that's the fun, the only fun that's worth a lady's shooting. Oh! dear, how stupid you are, Lily-bullero! She wants to make us believe she never tried to break a heart yet, Bessy. Now, don't we know better?"

"You are becoming extremely improper, my dear," answered the young lady thus addressed. "Don't you see how grave Miss Edwards looks?"

"Ah!" replied Fanny, with a mischievous expression, "I am afraid you and I have kept bad company of late. But Leila dear, never mind her. I know you can give way to weaker moods if— if duty calls. You *can* descend to gladden the hearts of youthful Cambridge dons—. Oh, heavens, Bessy, what have I done? Hide me, I'm in despair: how *could* I tell"—(looking up imploringly in Bessy's demurely smiling face)—"that there was a whole powder magazine there, and that my little farthing taper would explode it?"

"No," whispered Miss Tylney, in her soft, clear, voice, just behind them, making the two merry, mischievous girls start like the guilty things which they were, "you couldn't tell—but perhaps there was no magazine; fire, however, is a dangerous plaything."

"Life is meant to be merry, dear Miss Tylney," pleaded the young nymph, with a pretty twinkling smile.

"Not altogether, fair mischief, but I do love merry hearts right dearly. Only—only—"

"You won't have your favourites quizzed?"

"No, I don't mean that. Sometimes it's remarkably good for them. I was thinking of the subject, not the person."

"Eh, well-a-day! Lady Caroline. Of all subjects under the sun, flirting and love-making, and all such intolerable folly and fiddle-faddle, are the most usual and most legitimate subjects for fun. Besides, Leila is such a very charming and superior young person, we should die of envy if we couldn't poke a little fun at her."

"What should flirting and love-making end in?"

"Oh, bother! Marriage, I suppose," said Miss Bessy.

"Oh, tweedle-dum! Marriage, I'm afraid," said Miss Fanny.

"And that is not at all an important affair, I suppose," replied Miss Tylney, with an arch yet serious smile.

"Go away!" exclaimed Fanny, playfully, repulsing Miss Fortescue, who now approached. "This is not for good folks like you, Miss Fortescue! Only for little sinners, like Bessy and me. Now,

dear Miss Tylney, give us a delightful little preachment, all to ourselves, and we'll be so good, won't we Bessy dear? And I'll never," dropping her voice to a whisper, "flirt, even with Mr. Ned the Knowing one, again—no, never—till I'm engaged to somebody else."

So the little preachment went on in a snug little nook, amid the deepening twilight, while two sweet voices, accompanied by the piano, in the distant drawing room, rose and fell together in strains that were wafted from the open French windows. Near those windows the rest of the party were gathered, sitting, standing, or reclining in picturesque attitudes and elegant dresses, with their fair young faces attuned to the music, like living statues grouped by some great artist.

The expression, in a certain celebrated letter, applied to faithful disciples, viz., "living stones," is apt to strike at first as painfully incongruous, till we reflect that those stones were part of a "living temple," or church. But perhaps it might—looking at that fair group, transfixed and motionless under the music's spell—also be permitted a weak brother to think of "living marble," and of that statue brought to life whereof poor Gerald, bending over his tragedy, had so passionately dreamed.

The distant church clock pealed the hour of ten. The ladies' carriages come up the drive. Shawls were in request. Lips met in loving kisses. The high spirits of an earlier hour were quite subdued. The two specially playful kittens, who had been listening to the discourse in the arbour, seemed under the influence of some saddening yet holy spell, and lingered round Miss Tylney, as loth to go, taking leave of her at last with an affectionate almost tearful embrace. And then the whole fairy scene melted away as by enchantment, and Leila leaned against the drawing-room window frame, looking at the stars, and wondering to find herself in such perfect quiet, and alone.

"Good night," whispered a voice behind her.

"Dear Miss Tylney, *will* you tell us?" pleaded Leila.

"What, my child?"

"Do, dear Miss Tylney," chimed in Ellen.

"Do please tell us what you said to them in the arbour—about—"

"Flirting and marrying," supplied Ellen.

"Not to night, darling," replied Miss Tylney. "Good night, and God bless you."

She turned to retire, and then Leila noticed the tears on her pale cheeks.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"I KNOW what you mean by that look, Lilybell," remarked Miss Tylney, the next evening, as the three ladies sat, work in hand, in the little arbour; "but should you not finish reading to us this 'Conquest of Granada?'"

"There is some better conquest, I think, you can tell us about, Caroline," replied Miss Fortescue.

"Ah, but mine are sadly old-fashioned notions. And what interest can there be in an old maid's story?"

"Dear Miss Tylney," said Leila, as she leaned her head sorrowfully yet peacefully against that lady's shoulder, "don't you tell me we all have, or ought to have, our 'Saracens to conquer?' I am sure you have won peace. Teach me. Am I so much less worthy your teaching than Fanny and Bessy? What were you saying to them?"

A hearty kiss was the first answer Miss Tylney gave her. The second was—

"I will tell you and Ellen more than I told them, if you really wish it—more than I ever told any human being before. But what I told them was little more than this, that I had long believed God had made men and women so different and yet with such wonderfully attractive powers for each other, and given them such deep sympathies with each other, for a higher purpose than mere amusement. Is it not so, Leila?"

"I have believed it."

"Must there not be a very solemn and yet glorious meaning in this relationship of the two sexes, when we see how beautiful and awful is the true love of a man and woman for each other, from the first passionate 'falling in love,' as we call it, onwards to the marriage vows and wedded love, and then to the final parting, when the hearts which had been one are divided by the death-warrant? Was it not a wedding, Leila, which our Saviour chose as the occasion for first manifesting His glory? And does He not describe Himself as the Bridegroom of Humanity? Do not words seem utterly inadequate when we want to speak of the holiness and beauty of this marriage bond, with all that leads up to it and flows from it—and all that it is, and all that it symbolizes? I can't talk of it—but you understand, Lilybell,—Ellen?" The lady paused.

"Pray, pray go on," murmured Ellen.

"I cannot speak of it, dearest. When I most realize all that I think our Heavenly Father in His wonderful love intended, and what a glimpse it gives us into the heavenly meaning of those words, 'God is Love—'" She paused again, but, after a short silence, continued thus: "I mean that then I feel with a degree of pain I cannot describe how horribly all this holiness and divine beauty and tender love is desecrated—how dear, silly girls make a mere idle sport of it,—how men—how men," and her voice faltered, and her bosom heaved as if in some strong agony—"how men defile and curse it with their intolerable vileness. Oh, Nelly, Nelly!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears.

Ellen soothed her with affectionate tenderness, and Leila knelt beside her, clasping one of her hands, and murmuring, "Forgive, forgive me for asking." But Miss Tylney, soon recovering herself by a great effort, said: "It is for you to forgive me for being so foolish. I do want to speak on this matter to you. I do want to live to help, if it be ever so humbly, to bring about a better state; and it is women who must work for it. You have each of you, I think, much to do. Oh, if women generally—if they only *would* take up this great solemn question. They have it in their own power: it does, indeed it does, rest with them."

"Women are the greatest sufferers by men's wickedness, I believe," said Ellen, "and, somehow, women do not seem to care so much about what their own sex suffer, because of the unselfishness of their nature, which seems to make them think it natural they should suffer for others . . . And then, again, there is their natural shrinking from such subjects, which prevents their throwing themselves into the work of preventing or remedying all this evil."

"Nelly, I'm sure you do not think of what you are saying. Is there not motive enough to work when we think of the moral ruin which *men* bring on *themselves* here—the appalling misery and destruction they are preparing for themselves hereafter? Is not this quite as great as any evil *women* bring upon themselves, and infinitely greater than any amount of suffering with which a merciful Providence chastises those women, or the partners in their guilt, on earth? Nay, is not the whole burden of guilt—the whole damning weight of sin in many cases—on the man's soul? Would women ever give themselves up to this deadly sin, if men, taking the basest advantage of their trustful love, did not first tempt and ruin them? Women are often vain and foolish, but not profligate till betrayed."

"What can we do?" asked Ellen, sadly, after a short pause.

"This, Ellen: bear witness against the immoral opinions of society. And this *you* can do, Leila Featherstone. If a man ever asks you to love him, and be his wife—if ever a woman gives you her confidence, and asks you to advise her in this solemn matter—you can ask if the man's soul and life are as pure as your own. Few men would think of asking that woman to marry them, whose life had been defiled by licentiousness; and does not God ask of man the same purity which man demands of woman? I do not, of course, say perfection. But I do say 'equal Purity.' The same standard must be applied to both, for both are spiritual beings, equal in the sight of God. The *soul* of each is the immortal being; it is as spiritual beings only that they can become children of God, dwellers in heaven, or inhabitants of hell. 'In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither male nor female.' And looking to the very awful words of our Saviour in regard to this relationship of the sexes, I do say that a woman is bound to ask for the same purity in the man who would make her his wife which he requires of her. It can, indeed it can be no true marriage, Ellen, if that purity is wanting on either side."

"I believe it, Caroline, with my whole heart," replied Miss Fortescue.

"But, oh! Miss Tylney," pleaded Leila, "surely you speak of sin which is found only in the lowest depths of degradation. How can this matter affect us, and those we meet? I never thought—" she stopped.

"Dear child! I could almost pray God that you might die in your innocence and ignorance, rather than live to know all that men too often are, yes, in our own society—what is justified among them, practised, and approved. It seems cruel to tell you this. Yet no great evil is ever conquered without martyrs; and some women, oh Leila, some must know!"

Leila felt too much overpowered to speak. It seemed to her as if a whole hell of wickedness, of which before she had only heard the faintest, far-off whispers, had suddenly yawned at her feet. "Could it be right," thought Miss Tylney, "thus to enlighten one so young and pure?" At length she continued—

"My own dear Leila, I would not for worlds have brought this dark shadow over your life, but that the world can be redeemed, humanly speaking, only through the martyrdom—the patient bearing of the cross—of those who can witness a good confession for the truth and right. When God sees those who are able to bear this cross, He calls them, and offers it. I believe He has bidden me speak to you now."

Leila looked up with a bright light in her eloquent eyes.

"And there was another thought that has made me specially want to speak to you, Lily, on this sad business," said Miss Tylney, as with a touching tremulousness in her tone, she continued, "You are not too young to be loved, or to love. I would save you, if I may, from my own misery." It was some time before she could add—"I was not older than you when a frequent guest at my father's, amiable, refined, accomplished, with a very winning tongue, called out my interest in him by that which he showed in me. I knew he loved me long before he spoke of it; and when, at length, he told me all, I felt that I could give myself to him with all the love God meant a woman to feel for the man whom she accepts as her future husband. But then, Lily, I did not know what a burden and curse lay upon English life. Like you, I thought that all such vileness was something afar off—found only in the festering sores of a corrupt civilization—that young men, who were introduced into our society, who were welcomed by our fathers and mothers, and who asked for, sought our affections, would at least pass muster with the better class of savages. I loved and trusted him with my whole heart. I confessed in words a little of what I felt, when he spoke with such passionate eagerness; and I think he read far more in my face than I dared to tell him. And then, Lily, when we were so happy in our mutual trust, and when I began talking to him of high and holy things, and thought we would draw near to God's presence together, and ask His blessing to keep us pure in His holy Son, and to let the divine light of His love fall in its sanctity upon our mutual affection—then (please, Leila," and the speaker's voice sank into an unnatural softness and calmness, while she clasped Miss Fortescue's hand tightly in her own, "measure something of my love for you by my telling you all this)—then, gradually, I found how shamefully his life had been desecrated, by what he said most young men regarded as necessary and allowable indulgence. How far, far apart we really were, when I thought we were so very near! And then,"—(a silence)—"then—we parted—outwardly—but the true separation—that had been made before."

After a few moments, Miss Fortescue said, "Did he seem astonished?"

"Yes," answered Miss Tylney. "He was too much amazed at my indignation and grief to answer seriously or coherently at first; and then there were expostulations, and all given as if I were a poor, little, mistaken child, to be humoured and coaxed; as one who was making herself rather ridiculous about trifling and inevit-

able follies, instead,"—and her eyes flashed with indignation through her tears,—“instead of a woman who had been cruelly insulted and wronged by a man asking her to be his wife, who for years had been cutting himself off, by continual sin, from all the divine sanctities of marriage! Oh, Leila, my beloved Lilybell! let my sorrow be sufficient for us both.”

She gave Leila a passionate kiss, as the tears streamed from her eyes, turned away, and walked rapidly towards the house.

There was a long silence, broken at length by Ellen saying—

“Yes, and then, in that world where they neither marry nor are given in marriage, shall she not receive for her brave, holy faithfulness,

* * * For all her pains and fears,
The day of woe and watchful night;
For all her sorrows, all her tears,
An over-payment of delight?”

“And she will come, bringing many poor, fallen, penitent, rescued outcasts with her,” continued Ellen. “Now you understand something of the blessed work she is doing at that refuge she established in Camberwell, and why she has laboured and prayed so earnestly during so many years for its poor inmates.”

“I see it all now,” murmured Leila. “But oh, how very, very sad it all is.”

“Sad, indeed,” replied Ellen. “But I believe Caroline is right. If this great terrible evil is ever to be checked, we women must learn to set our faces against it.”

“God help me never to forget it,” said Leila, at length. “But oh, Miss Fortescue, those whom *we* care about . . . surely they are pure?”

Then Ellen could restrain herself no longer. Harry, during his Easter holiday, had poured out to her with such deep earnestness, his love for Leila, and his sister had listened with such infinite delight, that although he had subsequently written a brief account of his final talk with Mr. Featherstone, she could not now forbear saying:—

“Dear Lily, I have so often, so very much longed to see you and Harry understand each other. I’ve thought you were so truly made for each other. I do love and esteem you both so very highly, dearest——” (she drew Lilybell, who was covered with blushes, nearer to her) “and he has told me, darling, how fervently he has hoped and prayed that you would some day——” She bent over her favourite and kissed the down-drooping eyelids and long dark

lashes. Then the lids were raised, and the large earnest eyes looked up at her with so beseeching an expression, and such fathomless depths of trusting love in them, as she murmured—

“And is he then—do you think? is he such a pure, noble—such a true man, dear, dear Miss Fortescue, as a true woman may——?”

But the arm which had been pressing her so lovingly to the sister’s heart dropped. It was as if a torpedo shock went through them both. Ellen shivered, as if in mortal pain, while she sighed out something like “Oh! that I might altogether say yes—but——”

Leila, a moment before, had been full of a strange joy; then that heavy sigh and “but” brought her for the moment greater suffering than anything else she had ever felt in her life.

“And yet, my Lily, he is very, very penitent, and as sorrowful as he is noble; and he is not—oh, no, God forbid!—he is not such as Miss Tylney spoke of; he has never, never lived in sin, and his future life, indeed, it ever will be, dearest, pure and lofty, and worthy of a pure and noble woman’s heart. And oh, Leila, none of us can know how constant and terrible are the temptations young men yield to, or resist and triumph over, under the present state of things. I do believe there is infinite nobleness in many of these young men’s souls, only it is their wretched, cruel education, and the companionship.”

“‘We all may ken the ill that’s done, but none know what’s resisted,’” Leila whispered; and her poor little, sorrowful, fluttering heart was somewhat comforted.

When she next met Miss Tylney, she could not help thinking of “saint-worship,” with far greater leniency than she had done previously, and with difficulty refrained from kneeling down to kiss the hem of her garment, and to ask her blessing. “An old maid, will the world call her?” said she to herself—with what Adelaide called her “grim white woman’s smile”—“I think that must often be a title standing high in the ‘Saints’ Peerage.’”

Then her thoughts flew up to Clerkenwell, and hovered about there until she could sit down at her desk, go on with the fanciful tale she was writing for Alfred to illustrate, and then concoct a loving little note to him. She felt sure *he* was still unstained by gross vice. And so, once launched into thoughts of him, she soon recovered her peace of mind, and was at rest. But the rest of heroines and martyrs in this world is not long unbroken.

CHAPTER XXIV.

YES, of course, it was a very pleasant time for Gerald. Never had he been so happy since he was a child, rollicking in the hay or romping in Christmas games. It was, as Jean Paul would have called it, "the beautiful flower-time" of his life, brief but blessed. By doing strenuous battle against all envy and jealousy, dwelling not on what Leila Featherstone might have been to him but what she was to Harry, he gradually was able to think of her and be at peace. She dwelt in his imagination "like a star, apart"—a holy and beautiful idea, far above mortal passion and earthly desire. So cricketing, riding, and gardening, walks and talks with his mother, arbour building, and long rambles in Epping Forest, alternated charmingly with composition, Sir Walter Scott, and Hallam's "Middle Ages."

And Gerald's mother was supremely happy, too, in having her son at home, and seeing him so intensely rejoicing in all his favourite pursuits—happier than she had been for many a day. Gerald felt thankful to the day of his death, but especially after what took place not very long subsequently, that he had had these few happy months in her society.

The tragedy grew apace, his dramatic and poetic power increasing in geometrical proportion with practice. In the last act he felt all the poet's frenzy seizing him with absorbing power, and he wrote scene after scene with a rush of inspiration and joy that amazed himself. About two o'clock one summer's morning Gerald wrote down the last words, naturally ending with—"Dies. [The curtain drops.]" Extinguishing his lamp and throwing open his window, he looked out on the dim landscape in the faint dawn, believing that now at last he had risen above the world to the "Halls of the gods," and sooner or later, if not in his lifetime then when he had gone to his rest, that world would think of him, with honour and love; would be stirred to the depths of its great throbbing heart by his creations, and would remember him. Immortal hours!

But how could he gain the audience needful to consummate his success? The play must be acted, if he was to be either crowned or freed. Where was the man—aye, more—where was the woman who would worthily impersonate his glorious dreams? One great tragedian alone at that time trod the boards of the English stage, but he was fallen on evil times, and into yet more evil hands.

Gerald obtained an introduction to him, had a gracious and kind reception, deposited the precious manuscript in the great man's hands, was told to call again in three or four weeks, and during that period "waited" *not* patiently "for the verdict."

While so waiting he called two or three times on Alfred Featherstone, and at first was very cordially received, but rather coolly afterwards—at least he fancied so—and feared to intrude.

He tried unsuccessfully to get him down for a day or two to Hartland, and also endeavoured in vain to inveigle him once into a row up the river. The first and second time he called Alfred was painting enthusiastically—the third he was listlessly reading "Don Juan," as he reclined on the sofa of his twelve-foot square sitting-room. The fourth was this wise. Gerald had suddenly remembered, one fine morning about three weeks after an interview with Mr. Macready, in Lincoln's Inn, that the prizes were to be distributed that day at the "London University," by Lord Brougham. With a bounding heart he cantered up through Islington to the neighbourhood of Gower Street, resolving to witness the inspiring ceremony (in the capacity of a veteran warrior looking down on youthful heroes), and then to inflict his company on the lonely artist in Clerkenwell. As he entered the well-known spacious fore-court, and passed under the shadow of the noble portico, the old spell of enchantment came over him, and the memories, the hopes, the resolves of his youthful prime made his eyes a little dim, and his heart beat quickly. But he mingled with the crowd (all strangers to him, alas! now) with a proud and buoyant consciousness that those hopes and stern resolves were not altogether "fallen leaves." He could bear to stand on the hallowed ground and see the young aspirants for learning and fame pressing forward in their academic career, some of them receiving from the hands of the great statesman, orator, reformer, philosopher, the honours which he (Gerald) had once felt to be the highest reward and greatest happiness earth could offer, but which he himself never gained—he could behold their triumphs now without bitterness of soul. He seemed to have got far beyond all that, and to be striving, a man among men, for a nobler crown. He looked on the deep-furrowed countenance and the lofty mien of the wonderful man (who was still one of his English heroes) with reverent hero-worship; but he remembered Schiller and Goethe, and whispered to himself that true dramatic art was higher than the stormy conflicts of the senate and the bar; and might lead to a mightier, wider, more enduring sway over the destinies of mankind than even the eloquence and statesmanship of Henry Brougham.

Mad, mad, was he not? fit for a Poet's bedlam. * * * *

Cheer after cheer now rang through the lofty theatre as the successful candidates came up to receive their honours at the hand of Lord Brougham, who was then at the very summit of his greatness, indisputably the foremost man of all his time. Yet louder, heartier cheers greeted the noble orator when he gave his magnificent closing address, and few hearts, in the bosom of either young or old, that were not proud—many to enthusiastic reverence—of the founder of their University, the reformer of laws, the defender of liberty, the emancipator of the slave, the guardian genius and the indomitable advocate of education, the impersonation of so much that was then most dear to educated Englishmen of the Liberal school.

The exciting ceremony at length was over, and Arlington was wending his solitary way to a neighbouring chop-house, preparatory to dropping in on Master Freddy, when a gentle poke in the back made him veer briskly round as a loud "Ha, ha!" saluted his ears. Pierce, Hackett, and brother Dick surrounded him.

"We knew it was you," shouted the latter.

"By his *stern* grandeur, and that breadth of beam in the upper decks!—eh?" cried Pierce.

"Lor! I had seen him in the theatre all along, looking as solemn as a judge," mumbled Hackett.

"Thinking what a muff old Harry Brougham was making of himself," responded Pierce, maliciously, for Gerry's appreciation of the brilliant statesman was well known.

"No, not a bit of it," grunted out one of two other men who had just come up, proving on examination to be Bob Nicholson and Ned the Knowing. "He was thinking when he should be Lord Arlington and President of the Council. Tip us your daddle, old fellow! How do? Age since you've shewn among us."

"Ned!" cried Hackett, "how goes the nursery for sucking Shakespeares down in that hole of yours there in Leadenhall Street? I expect you'll turn out some first-rate poets."

"Do you keep Gerry Arlington in a cage, and make him spout to you in the intervals of severe business, *vice* 'motley and bells'?" inquired grunting Bob.

"*Vice* tom-fool! No, we can always send to your office for that," answered Ned, with dignity. "Don't mind him, Arlington. He's now on the 'Weekly Snarler,' besides reporting for the 'Morning Angel,' the which agrees with him far better—in fact, it suits him to a T." Then, spacing out a circle and making a bow, Ned thus addressed them: "Young men, you do not know the majestic—

I may say, the lordly—presence in which you stand. This—this individual,” pointing to Arlington, who gazed in mild compassion on the scene, “has become a gentleman. He has left the shop. He takes his pleasure. He is a great man.”

“Ye gods! Then let him treat us to champagne.

“Not so; rather to mock-turtle and heavy wet.”

“Ye kind but greedy bumpkins, hear!” replied Gerald, with dramatic propriety; “since we *are* met (worse luck for us) let us now have a regular feed together, all,—for ‘Auld Lang Syne.’ I vote we (*omnes*) adjourn to dine. If the medicals have no money, Ned, we’ll stand treat.”

“Hear, hear! Tremendous applause in the galleries!” And so they marched along, three and three—the said medicals and Ned boisterously leading the way, Gerry, Dick, and Nicholson following more leisurely behind.

Arlington knew his only chance of gaining Richard’s confidence, and of hearing the truth about Richard himself, was to be friendly with his companions. Besides, his genial and sociable disposition was sometimes too strong even for his taste and refinement; and hence he rejoiced in most sorts of companionship, at least, as long as his conscience or taste were not too much offended. So they all repaired to a neighbouring tavern, much frequented by the former *élèves* of the Univ. Lon., Gower Street.

“Where’s our illustrious Ned?” inquired Gerald, while waiting for the rump steaks and oyster sauce.

“Down in the street,” answered Dick, looking out of the window, “doing the polite to——”

“A nymph of the *pavé*, I’ll be bound,” quoth Pierce.

“What, at this time of day!” answered Richard, contemptuously. “Gammon! he’s cottoning with a policeman. I fear, brother Gerald, you’re going to be apprehended.”

“What’s the crime, brother Dick?”

“Writing bad poetry. Ha! ha! ha!” When the chorus of laughter subsided, Nicholson remarked with his usual sweetness of manner:

“That ridiculous little ass, young Grant, is always fraternizing with the ‘peelers,’ tipping and treating them. It is such a lark to see them capping him on the sly, and he strutting along as big as the Lord Mayor.”

“Oh golley!” cried Pierce.

“And then,” continued Nicholson, “at the faintest scent of a row anywhere, night or morning, away goes Neddy, shouting for a policeman. And he has always got some secret suspicions and

mysterious information about burglars and pickpockets, and the last new murder, which he diligently communicates to them."

"Fact is," observed Pierce, "Ned's an arrant coward, and he never feels safe except beside their big bulk."

"Well, I must say, you'd hardly know the Strand now at nights," replied Bob; "it's as quiet as a cabman's conscience."

"Ah, curse the quiet, and the raw lobsters too, into any amount of—what you please," suggested Hackett.

"Haw! haw! haw! Hackett's as sore as a hackney-coach-horse under the collar, about the 'peelers!' Haw! haw! ha! ha! He was collared himself the other night, by George!" sang out Pierce.

"Hold your d—d tongue," cried Hackett, grinning from ear to ear.

"And was carried off," continued Pierce, as well as his laughter would let him, "to, to the station-house—ho! ho!—night before last, along with two drunken costermongers—ah! ah! ah!—and an Irish nymph, in a wheelbarrow—ha! ha!—I shall never forget it. Haw! haw! haw!"

"And fined five shillings next morning at Marlboro' Street, as I can testify on oath, if required," put in Bob the Smiler. "Here, Knowing Ned," continued he, as that small-sized but alert young gentleman made his appearance along with the rump steaks, "you are requested to inform this honourable company what the deuce you find so attractive in the society of policemen?"

"Gentlemen," replied Ned, as he set down a tankard of ale which he had emptied at a draught, "I will enlighten you. A new policeman (long life to Bobby Peel!) is to my mind, gentlemen, a splendid realization of one's highest imaginations, as the gentleman opposite would say—*i.e.*, of Order and Law. I love to watch a nascent row—furtively, may be, promote it"—("You!" growled Bob, with stern contempt)—"and then to behold the blue Apollo stalk up sedately—a word or two at most—perhaps the truncheon shown, just shown, no more—and all is peace. Oh, but it's grand, my hearties! And yet I wonder at myself. For once I do remember in my tender youth (you see I've caught the '*ars poetica*' from this 'poetic ass,' my fellow-clerk—oh, that Bramble were but here!) a Paddington stage-coachman, when the 'peelers' first budded, convinced me they were the most fatal infringement on public liberty and the rights of Englishmen since 'Magna Charta,' and I got down from the box in Finsbury Square, consecrating my life to overthrowing the accursed institution."

"They were only just in time," remarked Pierce. "Do you

remember the fight outside Temple Bar, when the mob rose, in the Reform Bill days?"

"Don't I, just," replied Hackett. "The skulls were cracking like egg-shells. I proclaimed myself a surgeon, and was safe in the thick of it. The jolliest row I was ever in. We never get such now-a-days, bother! Thank'ee for a 'tater.'"

"By-the-bye, what was the jaw about in Saint Stephen's last night, Bob my charmer?"

"Is he gone into Parliament, then? What a pleasant time they must have of it if Bob's there," remarked Gerald. "But how did he get in? The rotten boroughs are gone."

"Sir," answered Bob, "the largest constituency honours the 'man of the people.' I champion the 'shoeless.' Come, tip us the oyster sauce, Ned, if you aren't going to eat 'em all yourself. Didn't you know, Sir, I was returned for the West Riding a month ago by the Have-nots to bleed the bloated aristocracy who HAVE? Ah, you'll see me prime minister some day."

"In the island of Barrataria?" inquired Gerald.

"Come, no fine words here," growled Hackett.

"It only means the Paradise of disappointed cabmen, unsought-for medicals, briefless barristers, and seedy opera-dancers, my dear," answered Ned, patronizingly. "Mr. Arlington, our trusty Bob, as I told you, disdaining the aid of dull-eyed solicitors, has become a writer for the 'Weekly Snarler,' that being the weakest and most snarlingest paper wherewith he was acquainted. By-and-bye he hopes to get the reins himself; and oh my! won't he, and don't he, cut up the Whigs and the Radicals, and the great men and the little men, and all new books; and won't he just go into the 'pit,' when a new tragedy in five acts is coming out, and help to damn it like a Briton over-night; and won't he just show it up in the 'Morning Angel' and the 'Weekly Snarler' next morning, and hint at the author's name, and his mercantile antecedents?"

"Get me a bit of rope then, Ned," rejoined Gerald. "I'll give him the end of it first and then hang myself with it afterwards, unless you'll promise not to praise it yourself anywhere."

"How quiet our infant sits on his perch to-day," quoth Pierce, nodding towards Richard.

"Ugh! don't 'ee see its nurse and father confessor's come?" retorted Hackett in an under-tone, winking at Gerald.

"How ridiculously like each other the *par nobiles fratrum* are growing," was emitted by Ned's shrill tones.

"Diable!" cried Bob, indignantly, "if you never learnt Latin, why the d——l do you try to quote it?"

"I say, my boy, I've been practising in the shooting gallery three hours a week, and I don't show a very large figure to my opponent. No man insults me, remember, with *himpunity*." The last word with great vehemence. "I answer you as Dr. Parr once responded to an impudent young scamp, like you, who set him right in a Greek quotation—yes, I extinguish you with all my scorn, and reply, in a voice of thunder, 'boy, I have forgotten more Latin (I mean Greek) than you ever knew.'"

"I swear I shouldn't know 'em apart," said Pierce, looking askant at the two brothers.

"No, nor their voices in the dark," rejoined Bob, contemplatively.

"What do you think," continued he, in a confidential aside to Pierce, "young Slogan, of Guy's (you know the young muff), actually told me the other evening that he had seen Gerald Arlington, after supping at the Albion, walk into mother H——'s a little top-heavy, ha! ha! He was rather disgusted, because he had known something of Arlington at University College, met him now and then in society, had formed an immensely high opinion of him, and then to see his hero going down to your level, for instance. Pierce. No offence."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Pierce. "What a shame! I suppose it was rowdy Dick, after all!" he added, still aside.

"To be sure. It's the two Dromios brought to life again."

"I say," sang out Pierce, "your brother will treat you, Arlington, some day, as badly as Sheridan in the gutter served poor Wilberforce. But perhaps Mr. Gerald Arlington, in the course of years, will deserve it."

"Shut up, you beggar!" ejaculated the younger Arlington, with his mouth full. "It's you get drunk and then fancy *I'm* cut. It's an infernal shame to blacken a poor fellow's character like this."

"Pot calling the kettle black," remarked Hackett. "Now, I'll put you up to a trick or two concerning this lively young sprat's doings about town," continued he, addressing the elder brother; for, as he whispered to Pierce, "it would be a good lark to get up a row" between the brothers, seeing how vexed Gerald looked, and having long nursed a grudge against him for snubbing him in former days when Gerald was disgusted with his coarseness. So, in spite of Richard's attempted opposition, he proceeded to detail a certain recent "spree" until even Pierce and Nicholson, with suppressed merriment, declared it was "too bad." Gerald quietly rose and was wishing them good evening when Ned and Pierce rushed at the door, all except Hackett vowing he shouldn't go, and all in turn swearing at Hackett for "a beast;" finally, they besought

Gerald so pathetically to stay and sing them a song that he was mollified, and resumed his seat for a little while, but refused the song. Grunting Bob tried to give a cheerful turn to the conversation by inquiring of Ned the particulars of his recent interview with the policeman. Ned, feeling for Gerald, and being considerably disgusted himself with Hackett, rattled away, saying, "Talk of larks, indeed! why, only last night I had a jolly flare up, though I was sorry a bit for poor Freddy. Well, you see, I had heard there was to be what they call a 'temperance' meeting, in Saffron Hill, of all places in the world, and that there would be a regular shindy and lots of fun, for, you know, these temperance chaps really say nobody is to drink any beer, spirits, and so forth, and so the publicans in the neighbourhood had got a lot of roughs and pickpockets together, primed them well, provided them with the usual stock-in-trade of rotten eggs, cabbage-stalks, dead kittens, &c., and were then going to let them loose at the temperance meeting. Well, I got an inkling of it, and, by George! it was better than a pantomime. I haven't laughed so much for an age—and the orators caught it right and left, and ——"

"You went for a policeman?"

"Of course; fetched half-a-dozen, and when the curtain dropped on the row turned in for half an hour at Sadler's Wells." He hadn't intended to tell them any more, but couldn't resist the pleasure. "And then what do you think? Coming home about midnight, just as I turned the corner of Coldbath Fields Prison, what should I see but a fellow dancing about with his shirt over his breeches, brandishing what he calls a Scandinavian scimitar, and yelling like mad, with a great crowd hallooing, and a lot of women, some screaming as he made cuts at them, and others laughing as if they'd split."

"Fetched a policeman?" inquired Bob.

"No; there was one had got hold of the poor zany before I could say Jack Robinson, and took him off in the twinkling of a bedpost. Who on earth do you think it was? But I shan't tell you."

Now, Ned really did not want to tell, but, of course, having got so far his companions would not let him stop, and, besides, it was very pleasant to be an object of eager interest to his hearers, so on he went.

"Why, poor Freddy Featherstone."

Gerald winced as if in pain.

"Ah, I heard the other day he was doing some wild freaks in Clerkenwell," said Pierce. "Drunk?"

"No, not exactly—that's the worst of it. He was locked up;

and I was asking my friend, the inspector, just now, if he had heard any particulars, as it was kept out of the newspapers, and I couldn't hear anything about it at Bow Street this morning."

"Why, the worst of it?" asked Arlington, with an effort. Grant touched his forehead significantly, and was silent.

The men were listening quietly enough now.

"Poor devil!" sighed Pierce, at length.

"Oh, gammon!" growled Hackett, "who said so?"

"Divisional surgeon at the lock-up last night. I just went in to see fair play, of course. Surgeon said he was no more drunk than I was."

"Bosh! that's not saying much;" and the whole party laughed with a sense of comfortable relief. Pierce and Gerald, however, were by no means convinced, though the latter tried to be.

"Poor Freddy!" said the former, "he was a d——d good fellow, what little I've seen of him—sung a capital song in a way, you know, and told stories better than any man I ever knew, though they were rather smutty sometimes. I hope he won't come to grief. If there had been anything wrong in the line you mean the divisional surgeon would have kept him. Where is he now?"

"At his lodgings, I understand."

"Oh, then, it's all fiddlesticks! Pass the jug. Hang this dirty wash! Let's have punch. What do you say, my merry men, all?"

But they were not merry men at all. Grumbling Bob propounded the sentiment that it was growing flat, and that if they wished to preserve mutual respect they had better separate; and when Arlington rose and rang for the bill, the party speedily settled accounts, and dispersed. Gerald tried hard to get Richard to walk with him part of the way, at all events, towards Clerkenwell. This was what had kept him in his seat for the previous hour. But that young gentleman, with natural sagacity in his own opinion, and with suicidal folly as a question of fact, considered it best to keep out of his brother's way, whether at home or in London, if he suspected a storm was brewing. He knew that storm would come some time or other, but (as he also opined in his wisdom) the longer it was delayed the better.

"I shall see you on Saturday, you know, Gerry," he replied to Gerald's quiet but earnest entreaty for his company; "I am coming down to Hartland then. I really cannot come now. You wouldn't have me break a positive engagement, of course. Good-bye, old boy; we can't all be such saints as you! Don't peach: you never were a sneak. It wasn't half as bad as that fellow made out. Only

a jolly lark—Ha! ha!” And so, like some other young gentleman, he ran jovially down the “Incline” towards the “Dismal Swamp” at the bottom.

CHAPTER XXV.

NOT very cheerfully Gerald Arlington now wended his way to Alfred Featherstone's lodgings. He was unhappy about Alfred himself (though, perhaps, if the truth were told, chiefly on Leila's account), but more so on his brother's. What were all his dreams of artistic power and fame, and, above all, what were his aspirations and endeavours after a general millennium, when placed side by side with the fact that his own brother was slipping down into such disgusting depths of coarseness and vice? He had several times begged of him to give up Hackett's company altogether, and not to be over intimate with Pierce, threatening to tell their father if there were not a considerable reformation in his morals and manners. But Richard had always protested so vehemently against the imputations Gerald cast upon his friends' characters, and promised so fair for the future, that the latter was pacified and for a time deceived. But the whole state of the case had been made pretty plain to him that evening. What miserable vanities he seemed to himself to be pursuing while such tragic realities were transacting themselves close around him.

One thing was clear—that the time had come for speaking to his father. And he resolved that whatever their joint cogitations might suggest as to the best means for helping Richard out of his evil courses, he would do it even if it involved giving up his idolized literary pursuits. Much relieved by this determination, but oppressed with a sense of Alfred Featherstone's wretched condition, he knocked at the open door of No. —, Elm Street, Clerkenwell. The day had been growing more and more sultry, and was now settling down into a close thunderous evening. He was shown up to the first pair-front by a slipshod girl, with a customary grin upon her dirty face, and told to walk in. This he did, after a preliminary knock, which remained unanswered.

There sat Alfred on the sofa, his back to the open window, with

a neat little Turkish fez on his curly head, a clay pipe beside him, and the curious-looking weapon, which had created so much dismay the night before, at his feet. But he himself was staring into vacancy—apparently did not notice Gerald's quiet entrance. There was something so sad and strange in his whole look and manner that the words of greeting died away on Gerald's tongue. The still handsome face was drawn and haggard. The unbuttoned, dirty shirt, with its turned-down collar, *à la Byron*, and shoeless feet, with his tawdry embroidered jacket, spoke painfully of the *morale* of the wearer. But the look in the man's eyes was something which Gerald had never seen before, though he had more than once read of it. Greatly shocked, he stood speechless for an instant, and then, by a true instinct, began in a quiet, indifferent tone: "Why, Featherstone, you don't know your luck to-night. I'm come to give you a full, true, and particular account of Lord Brougham's grand distribution of prizes to-day at our old *Alma Mater*."

At the first sound of Gerald's voice, Featherstone turned his head slowly towards him, with the same strange look. Then, as the speaker proceeded, he jumped up—the horrid stare vanished—and, with an expression of intense relief, he caught hold of Gerald's hand.

"That's right, old chap! Thank'ee for coming. Glad to see you, by the powers! Have you dined? Ah, well then, have some punch? Or, no—you prefer tea?" And he rang the bell furiously. "Well, I'm glad to see you, Gerry, boy. Fact is, I'm getting moped to death here—you understand?"

"You don't seem to work very hard at the easel, Fred. That's the best receipt for goods spirits, isn't it,—hard work?"

"Oh, drat the easel! I don't know why, but don't you see, I never feel any interest in it now."

"Yet, 'pon my word," replied Arlington, "this is a beautiful thing you have got here, if I may be allowed," so saying, he removed the cloth which partially hid an exquisite half-finished oil painting, representing a warrior on foot holding back his rearing charger, and bending one knee to a lovely damsel who bore a marvellous resemblance to Leila Featherstone, while with his drawn sword he waved back his tumultuous followers. The maiden, who, though slight and graceful, looked almost majestic in her lofty purity, stood gazing with rapt expression on the hills beyond the embattled legions—the nearest of whom, like their chieftain, seemed ready to worship the youthful prophetess as if she were a saint just come down from heaven. A stormy sunset, breaking over a wild, mountainous-looking country, completed the

design, which, though still very unfinished, showed remarkable power.

"Do you like it? well, *I* did once; but, I don't know," and he laughed a short, scornful laugh. "I begin to fancy life altogether is a rare bit of humbug."

"Ah, Freddy, you wouldn't think so if you only did justice to your genius, and worked away heart and soul at your grand calling. By Jupiter, what a painter you might make if you would only 'deny yourself,' as the great German and the old Book say! But I fancy—if without offence, as we are in the moralizing strain——" and he paused, inquiringly.

"Fire away, old fellow."

"I fancy you have too much to do with this kind of thing," pointing to two or three pictures of opera dancers, "and also that sort of thing," rapping a black bottle. Then he caught sight of a new picture on the wall, and exclaimed, "Now, Featherstone, 'pon my word, that is too bad. It is utterly abominable. Give us a match; let me burn it;" and he reached out his hand to the print, but Alfred clutched his arm fiercely, shouting, "By Jove! you shan't. It's my only company, you beggar. Why, I turn its face to the wall when I go out, man!—so it's only those who peep that suffer! Ha, ha! Come, come, Gerry, don't bore me, that's a good fellow," added he, throwing himself languidly in an arm chair. "Discourse pleasantly. I'm fairly used up."

"Not fairly, Featherstone," answered Arlington; "I should say shamefully. You were meant for something better than all this."

Alfred suddenly said, in an excited tone—

"I believe you're right about the women and the bottle; but, fact is, I did give up all that sort of thing when I first came here, and I could have got along splendidly, I fancy, if I had lived near the 'paternal,' looked in upon them now and then, and had my little sister to see me sometimes. But, fact is, the gov'nor cut up uncommonly rough, and wouldn't have any intercourse; and then I got hypped, and you seemed shy of me, and I did not know any jolly fellows besides of the better sort, and so at last had to fall back on the old lot and two or three Cambridge scamps now hanging out in Lincoln's Inn—thorough-paced high cock-a-lorums, you know—and we all went to the bad together. That's the fact, Master Gerry, and no mistake! Have a little drop in your tea (producing the black bottle); just a little. Won't 'ee? Well, don't look so savage."

"Has Miss Featherstone, then, never been to see you?" asked Gerald, after a pause.

"Aye, once, God bless her; but not till it was too late, and I'd rather she had not come when she did come. But I'll tell you what, my lad—curse the pot, it's empty again—I'll tell you, Master Gerry, I can't stand this sort of thing any longer. I've got an invitation to Cowes, and I mean to have a run down there; after that, over to Paris; and then in October I shall be off to Cambridge—take lodgings, and paint like blazes. There'll be lots of company there, and plenty of fun, and that's all I want to keep me going. I shall sell this picture for a hundred and fifty, and then knock off another; and as soon as I have got a trifle put by, I'm d——d if I don't marry some pretty girl who'll serve for a model, and keep me in good spirits all the year round. Don't you see, I'll become a respectable old codger in that way, so steady and exemplary you won't know me, you villain. In fact, I shall be too good for you then. You'll have gone over to the enemy by that time, and become a regular rake yourself, for you can't keep up all these St. Joseph-sort of ways for ever, my boy, mind that. There'll be a reaction. You'll break out some day, as sure as fate." And so he kept rattling on, not in a very edifying fashion. Suddenly, a slight knock was heard, and in reply to Featherstone's gruff "Come in," a lovely apparition presented itself at the open door. Gerald stepped back in amazement; and Featherstone, for an instant, looked at his sister aghast.

There she stood, with a nosegay in her hand for her brother's chimney-piece, loving and lovely, smiling, and half curtsying in her pretty confusion—and what with the contrast between her sweet innocent face and the general surroundings, Gerald said to himself it was like a scraph coming down into the midst of a dance of chimney-sweeps. But in a moment Featherstone recovered himself, and exclaiming—"Not here, Leila! Not here, child. It stinks so of tobacco!" hurried her into the front room, which opened out of the one they had been sitting in, slammed to the door, made her sit down in a chair, gave her a kiss, and flung himself on the sofa.

"What on earth do you come here for, Leila? It's not the thing, you know, at all. I told you so before."

Poor Leila had looked happy, though timid, when she first came in, but this greeting bewildered her and brought the tears to her eyes.

"Mamma is gone to Hartland, and I got leave to stop at dear old nurse Gleig's,—you remember her, Alfred? She has been living some time in Clerkenwell, and it's only five minutes' walk from here—and I thought—Alfred, you know you said you would like to see me sometimes," she hesitated.

"But how are you to get home again? I can't——"

"Oh mamma will call for me at Mrs. Gleig's, as she returns. I have just an hour," added she, with her old playful smile; "if you will let me stay and 'mooze you a bit as we used to say. But," lowering her voice, "you must send that other pair of whiskers away to take a walk meanwhile. Who is it?"

"What, that fellow? Oh! Gerald Arlington, that's all. Don't you recollect him? He'll stay quiet enough there."

Now Leila had been glad of an excuse for not going to Hartland house with her mother, because she did not wish to meet Gerald, though she could not tell exactly why. She knew he had not called upon them for months, and she hardened herself in girlish pride at the thought of meeting him now. And yet (such are the inconsistencies of the youthful heart) she could not help feeling glad that they were thus again brought near to each other, and very thankful that he had come to see her brother. For her thoughts quickly, of course, reverted to the one absorbing idea—that brother's state and prospects.

"You are not looking well, *caro mio*," she whispered, leaning caressingly over him.

"Nonsense, Leila, don't talk stuff, that's a dear. Fact is, Lily, I have an engagement," and he rose up. Leila's distress and astonishment at her reception was now merged in alarm lest he should slip away, after all her efforts and stratagems to come and see him.

"But I want to see *the* picture, Freddy. *Have* you nearly finished it?" she added imploringly.

Alfred gazed for a few moments at his sister. The wild hard look left his face. He clasped his hands passionately across his forehead, threw himself on his knees at her feet, and actually burst into tears. Poor Leila took his hands in hers and exclaimed—

"Dear, dear Alfred, what *is* the matter? Tell me, do, Freddy dear—let me help you. I know you must be very unhappy. Oh, what is it? Why—did you—ever—go away—from home. Freddy, don't cry so!"

She was frightened at the violence of his anguish; and when he gasped out "water," she flew into the next room, calling to Mr. Arlington, "come! quickly! water! Alfred is ill—what shall I do?" Gerald hastily rang the bell, caught up a tumbler of water, and hurried into the next room; but the strange being who was the object of all this anxiety, had already passed into another mood, and looking up, with a dull smile, from the sofa, where he had again thrown himself, he said to Gerald——

"Don't look scared. Fiddle-de-dee. It's all right. Tell the girl, when she comes, to bring some more hot water for tea."

Gerald went back into the other room and tried to read. Leila sat down by her brother, and taking his hand, went on hurriedly—

"Alfred, do come home again, that's a dear good fellow. It can't be good for you living here."

"And knuckle down to our dad, I suppose, and pitch the paint brush to 'Old Nick,' and drudge away in the shop again, eh?"

"No, no, Freddy; that won't do. I think—I do think if you would come home and show him your picture, and ask his forgiveness, and tell him all about yourself, he would let you work on, for now you *can* show him something, can you not? Oh, I do so long to see it, and I am sure if it's at all like what it ought to be, he will be mollified, Freddino."

"It's too late," answered Alfred, gloomily. "The governor has treated me shamefully."

"Oh, but think how you had disappointed and vexed him, dear."

"It was abominable," replied her brother, "to forbid you ever to come and see me."

"But, you know, I got that statute repealed."

"Yes, too late—like everything else in this world. If you could have come once or twice from the first, as you promised——"

Gerald knocked at the door, and brought in a cup of tea. He and Leila interchanged distant bows.

"Oh! do get me the picture now, Alfred," pleaded Leila. Her brother moved wearily to fetch it. Through the open door Leila saw her pretty nosegay lying on the floor. Following Alfred, she just stepped into the studio to pick it up, and looked around for a vase to place it in—dropped it, and came back into the front room. Alfred, turning, saw where her eyes had been, and saw, too, an expression in them he had never beheld there before. He tore the print in pieces, followed his sister into the front room, shut to the door, and then absolutely cowered beneath her fierce, indignant look—he, the reckless *roué*, before that young girl's glance. Her first impulse was to fold her light muslin shawl over her shoulders and walk silently out of the house. And then her eye fell on the noble picture, and from that it wandered to the artist lying on the sofa, with his face half buried in his hands, looking so utterly humbled and wretched; and then her thoughts flew back to the hills of Westmoreland; and back, back again to their childhood; to their little gardens behind the green-house in their early home at Wimbledon; and she thought of all he had been, and all he might have been—aye, and of all he might even yet, by God's help, become

for good ; or, by the devil's help, and his friends forsaking him, for evil. So she turned back from the door and came up to him once more. She put her hand on his shoulder, and driving back her indignation and tears with strong effort, and mastering her voice with difficulty, for she seemed to be choking, she knelt down beside him and murmured, coldly, sadly——

“Not, oh! not too late yet, Alfred. If you will only come home And if papa still refuses,—then, if you will come and live nearer to us, and will put away all that is disgracing and ruining you, I will come, in spite of everybody, and see you every day—I know I should do right in that, brother. And if father and mother will let me, and you'll live a new life, I will come and stay with you, wherever you are.”

He answered only with a groan, and at the sight of his utter wretchedness, her righteous wrath was fast melting into the old yearning of pity and love. The door between the two rooms was ajar, so that Gerald could not help hearing all she said. He did not like to close it, partly because of the interruption at such a moment, partly because he almost feared what Featherstone's next outburst might be. As he heard her low tones of sweet sorrowful pleading, he thought how willingly he would endure any suffering if he might but be able to rescue them both from all this miserable coil.

“Oh! Alfred, Alfred!” continued poor Leila, “look at me, and tell me you will give up your bad ways. . . . I will do anything for you, if you'll only be good, and be like your old self. You've only been bad and miserable because we were all kept away from you. I know I could cheer you if you were mopy. . . . I will read and sing to you while you are painting. . . . I can't bring the piano, but I have learnt the accordion, and though it is a little like a Jew's harp” (Gerald knew the sad half playful smile that must be on her face), “yet it will do, dear, to set us off in a duet now and then.” There was a pause. Then in deeper, still more earnest tones :

“Alfred, dear, look up, and say you will come home, and live a manly Christian life. I'm sure you have great genius—that picture” (but the misery of having seen it for the first time under such circumstances, was almost too much for her, and her voice trembled) “that picture, dear, is wonderful—I am sure it will quite change papa—and, oh, do not break our hearts. Mamma does pine for you so.” . . . Her brother writhed as if in agony, still he did not raise his head. “Alfred, will you not listen to me? Remember how our mother has loved you ; *she* never thwarted you——”

"Would to God she had!" groaned her son. This was a terribly sore point, and Leila saw her mistake, for Alfred more than once had bitterly blamed his mother for what he called her "weak indulgence" of him as a boy.

"But, dear Alfred, she *is* your mother and would do anything for you any moment to see you happy; think of the old pleasant days, brother mine, when you were not ashamed to look us all, and so merrily, in the face. Remember how we used to go wandering about the fields together looking for the first primroses, and how we used to kneel down together at night to say our prayers——"

"By heaven, Leila, this is more than I *can* stand——" and he sprung from the sofa and rushed upstairs to his bedroom, leaving his sister pale and trembling. Gerald felt that he must go to her and say a word or two of comfort; and the look of trustful thankfulness, shining through all her misery and tears with which she greeted him, was worth something.

"I have loved him so, Mr. Arlington, ever since I could walk," said she, looking out of the window with a dreamy, tearful gaze. "And he has been a very kind brother to me. Is it not true—you know more than I can or may do—is it not true that he is going on in a very sad, wicked way? I think, Mr. Arlington, you feel all this to be wrong. I know, for he has told me, you have tried to help him to live a truer life. What can I do?—what can *we* do to save him?" There was a strange sweet comfort to her weary soul in that little word "*we*." There was intense happiness in it for the moment to Gerald. It required a great effort not to take her hand, and promise that he would serve her and her brother, loyally for ever. But the face of his absent friend rose up between himself and her. With a constrained and somewhat cold manner, he answered—

"Yes, Miss Featherstone, it is all true what you have said, and all that I can do to help you may rely on. Everything, I believe, depends on your being able to get him home; or, at all events, you must see him every day. Nothing short of your constant influence——"

"Oh, if I did but know what my duty would be, should my father refuse This seems to me the saddest of all trials, to see those we love destroying each other's welfare and happiness. What am I to do? Mr. Arlington, your words were a great help to me once. But what were all my former little troubles compared to this! But pray go and see him now. Do not leave him till he is quieter. I must leave very soon."

Gerald went up to Featherstone's room, and, before long, came down with a more cheerful countenance.

"He has promised me to go home on Saturday (to-day is Tuesday), and say anything to his father you urge, provided he has a line from you, in the meantime, to say that he will be forgiven, and kindly received. Then, he says, future plans can be settled afterwards."

"Thank God! thank God!" murmured poor Leila, "and thank you, too, Mr Arlington—oh, so much! But *don't* leave him."

"He is tired out, and going to bed; but he says he is quite calm and cheery now, if only you'll forgive him—so different from what he was before you came"—and their eyes met in a curiously tender, mutually grateful sort of way. It was but for a moment. Both remembered an old friend at Cambridge, and both drew back into their hard shells, though their hearts, for the instant, were very near each other.

Gerald turned to get his hat. Leila put on her bonnet, and, looking in the glass, saw Gerald, through the open parlour door, pick up the poor little nosegay, kiss it, and put it carefully into the water-jug on the table. And she saw, also, the expression on his face.

"You must allow me to escort you to your Mrs. *Somebody*," said Gerald, when they got into the street.

"Oh, it is not far, thank you," answered the young lady. "And your horse, I see, is waiting for you. What a pretty creature!" Leila loved horses, and could not resist patting the beautiful animal, which an ostler had brought, according to orders, from the Mews near Gower Street. Gerald felt envious in spite of his principles.

"I can lead him, Miss Featherstone, if you will allow me to accompany you—or the man can follow us with him—if my company is not disagreeable," added he, for she hesitated. "I think I had better, it is getting late."

So he walked beside her. He thought he might have just this last little treat. But they both felt grievously constrained. Leila, however, remembered to say: "I ought to have returned you those books you sent me, Mr. Arlington, some time ago. I very much enjoyed reading them; though I can't say I understand half of what Schiller means about 'Play' and the Play-something . . . impulse, isn't it?" Who could help laughing? Not Gerald. Then he answered: "But what one does understand is so grand and interesting that it makes the book wonderfully charming."

"Yes, indeed," returned Leila, with a little captivating blush.

"Do you not feel, Miss Featherstone, that thoughts like those he utters have a power, as I once said, to lift you above all these sorrows and cares, into a purer freer life?" And Leila Featherstone felt, as she always did when he talked with her, that *he*, at all events, had that power, and that through his interpretation, art and asthetic converse, raised her on eagles' wings, till her earthly life lay dwarfed beneath her. And for this she felt inexpressibly grateful to him, as to no other human being. She felt grateful too just then for a minor cause—viz., that he had kissed her poor little flowers. And that made her remember his look at the Gardiner's, and it suddenly began to be clear to her why he had so abruptly left the party that night. Hence she could not help feeling altogether more, when they came to part at Nurse Gleig's door, than she quite liked for Mr. Fortescue's sake, and certainly more than she wished to show, yet could not quite conceal. So that she turned swiftly away in bright sparkling confusion, but the tone of her "Good-night" sank deep into poor Gerry's soul.

Ah, and "poor" Leila! For while his artistic dreams had so impressed and captivated her without really touching her heart, she saw him now in a what to her seemed a far nobler light. She felt, and she saw how Alfred felt, the *moral* power of the man. No words could tell the comfort, the sweet sense of peace, that stole over her, amid the misery of that scene in Elm Street, at the contrast between Gerald's purity and strength and her unhappy brother's disordered viciousness. Did she not also feel the more drawn towards, or at least interested in Gerald, because (except for the caress bestowed on the flowers) he seemed not to care half so much for herself as formerly? Very likely. Such is human nature; and life altogether is rather perplexing. Yet it was not perhaps very surprising, that when the young lady was fairly swallowed up by Mrs. Gleig's humble domicile, and the ostler had got an extra tip, and with cheerful stride departed rapidly therewith to the "Cat and Bagpipes," Gerald led his nag round a corner, and then pretending to alter the girths, lest passers-by should witness, he reverently kissed the spot on his favourite's neck which those fair fingers had lately patted, mournfully remarking to his pony the while—

"I say, Gypsey, I wish I were kissing her instead—no I don't. But oh, Harry boy, I do wish you had been here to-day instead of me. Yet you won't grudge me *that* kiss, old fellow! Heigh ho! Hang the sex, and all creation! Cut away, Jenny!"

Thereupon with a groan and a laugh, he sprang to the saddle and galloped home.

Leila told her father and mother most of what had passed in Elm Street. Mr. Featherstone, though at first indignant and miserable, was nevertheless secretly delighted at the thought of Alfred's returning home. Mrs. Featherstone was alternately in tears and ecstasies. But her husband had no idea of at once surrendering the dignified position he now occupied towards a rebellious son, at length to be a suppliant at his feet, with his somewhat exasperating wife nearly in a similar posture. He was very fond of Leila, and rejoiced that the reconciliation should come through her means, but even she must not be made happy too soon. He had been greatly sinned against, and a certain amount of retribution was required by justice.

So looking grave, and indeed severe, he said "he must think it over, and would tell Leila what to write in a day or two." He did not refer to the subject the following morning, and was too busy even on the Thursday morning for Leila to get a talk with him, while on the Thursday evening two gentlemen came to dinner, and she had no opportunity till just before going to bed, when she whispered, "May I not write to Alfred? *please* tell me;" and she looked at her father so piteously that he was on the point of saying "Tell him I will let him come back, and God bless him."

But he did not say it. How strangely and terribly the evil habits of years cling round us in the very crisis of our lives, and drag us down into some fatal gulf.

Two of Mr. Featherstone's besetting sins all his life had been indecision, and an overwhelming sense of his own importance; so at this critical moment, whereon results of the last importance to more than one human being were hanging, he covered up his better nature, and his kind paternal affections, and only answered Leila as he kissed her, "Leave it to me, my dear—leave it to me; I shall do what is right. Good night."

Poor Leila went to bed with a heavy heart. She would have had a far heavier one had she been able to look then into her brother's studio and have seen two young men, dressed in tip-top style, alternately chaffing Featherstone, and persuading him to give them some promise, which he seemed very reluctant to do. They were handsome, gentlemanly fellows, and seemed to feel a great interest in the young artist.

"Why, you never could be such a sap, Featherstone, as not to come!" exclaimed the younger of the two. "It's the finest offer short of a dukedom man can make. There's Lord Leaver, and Tommy Clifford, and Captain Highflyer; and then the regatta coming off. Think of it, my boy. Oh, gemini! won't it be fun!"

and the speaker drew in a long breath of cigar-smoke with a rapturous sigh.

"Well, Berkeley," at length answered Featherstone with grave deliberation, "listen. I wait till Saturday morning; if I don't hear from the governor by then, I'm your man all the world over. Won't budge an inch till then. So, tally-ho! my buck . . . and flank up the wheeler!"

"Done!" exclaimed both the men, for they saw there was nothing else to be got out of him, and when the cigars were finished they took their leave, after a vain attempt to get Alfred to turn out for a lounge down Regent Street, and a peep in at a neighbouring promenade concert-room.

Very good fellows they were generally considered, as the world goes, remarkably genteel—*very* good fellows. But *they* had no sisters; Alfred Featherstone had, and that night he was firm.

The next morning Leila woke with a bad headache, and so much feverishness that her mother insisted on her keeping her bed.

"But, mother, have you not some message for Alfred?"

"Yes, dear; all right," answered Mrs. Featherstone, looking very happy. "Your father has agreed to his coming home, and I am going to write to him after breakfast."

But tradesmen came and must be attended to. Then the note was written, and order given to take it immediately to Elm Street. It was full of maternal love, and ended by saying that the writer would come in the carriage the following morning at eleven o'clock to fetch her son and his picture. But when "Jeames" received this note, with instructions to march off with it into the far-off wilds of Clerkenwell, he calmly remarked (aside) that he was not hired to be a twopenny postman, and finding besides that he would be wanted to go out with the carriage in the afternoon, and should be in danger of losing his dinner if he went on this discreditable errand, he pretended to understand that he was to take the letter to the post, and resolved to entrust it to the care of his Majesty's servants accordingly. Accidents, however, will happen. Having laid it on the slab in the servants' hall while he answered the bell, somebody by chance knocked it down, and it could not be found till the afternoon post was gone (there were not quite so many deliveries then as now). The footman, however, on his return home slipped it into the box, and assured his mistress, when she inquired, that it was all right.

Arlington rode up on Thursday to see Alfred. Found him cool and hopeful, and expecting a letter from his mother or sister by each post. Left him, therefore, in a cheerful frame of mind, and

departed quite hopeful and happy himself. But this was before the visit of those "very good fellows" above mentioned.

Some time ago folks heard that a man got adrift in a boat a little above Niagara Falls, without oar or sail. Ropes were hurled to save him. He almost caught one, but not quite. He drifted close to a small island. For one instant he might have leaped out and probably have caught the bough of an over-hanging tree. But the one instant was lost, and then it was too late. He had no other chance! People crowded to the banks, drawn by his shrieks for help. They could only pray for him. Rapidly he neared the edge—stood up one moment with clasped hands—and the next was over the Falls, plunged into another world than this.

On Friday night Alfred Featherstone stood leaning against his open window, anxious and indignant.

"Why in the name of Him who made us, if He did make us, doesn't Leila write? It's not her fault. No, it's the governor's. He can't forgive. Then let him die unforgiving. I care for nobody, and nobody cares for me! Such a jolly lark as you never did see! Ah! curse the fates! Well, it's no good crying over spilt milk! Hark away, my beauties! 'Goes to bed mellow! Goes to bed mellow! and dies a jolly fellow! Dies a jolly fellow!' That's the pace! Ah! but my poor little Lilybell, I do love *you* a bit. I can't bear leaving you in this fashion. If I go now, I shall never come home again—I know it. Never, never. If he can't forgive now, and make it all pleasant, he never will. It's plain he can't; and she can't bear writing to say so. But I wonder she's never been here since. I know she'd have come if it had not been bad news. Perhaps she'll come to-morrow morning, before they are here. Well, well, what's the good of fussing? Let's all go the devil in our own way! A letter may come to-morrow; and pray the saints it may! And yet, then, what a treat to lose * * * * Gammon and spinach! what's the odds as long as you are happy. Go to the devil and shake yourself!" Whereupon he went to bed.

At ten o'clock the next morning, a neat little dog-cart, with two splendid thoroughbreds, in tandem, stood at a door in Elm Street. One "very good fellow" held the "ribbands;" the other was in Alfred's studio, helping him to thrust some things into a carpet-bag. A dashing young "tiger" stood at the horses' heads, who pawed and snorted at the delay. Alfred and his friend sallied forth. Then Alfred lingered on the doorstep; looked up the street and down the street in vain. No letter—no postman. His friends grew impatient. He slowly comes down the steps; then up they all climb into the dog-cart. The tiger ricochets backwards, when the

horses dash off; then flies up behind, as the dog-cart rushes down the street; and on a glorious July day—London soon traversed—the whole party, swiftly, merrily, bowl away down the Portsmouth Road, bound for Cowes, and jollity, and a few other consequences.

A quarter of an hour afterwards Mrs. Featherstone's note arrived. A little later, as she and Leila were preparing to drive, in dignified state, from Portland Place to the deserted lodgings, a knock at the door—not the postman's, nor a tradesman's—arrested their steps.

CHAPTER XXVI.

GERALD ARLINGTON, would it not have been as well had you kept a little closer to that poor fellow till you had got him safe home—have stuck to him as your friend Harry did, once upon a time, in the dark waters?

Whoever asks that question, it is certain that the young gentleman thus appealed to had satisfied his conscience by that canter up to Elm Street on Thursday afternoon—having excellent reasons for not doing any more just then to ensure Alfred's safe arrival at his father's house. Besides, he had promised to come and see him off on Saturday morning, and so went his way. Yes—excellent reasons. One of them was, that he was very busy again. The idea of a novel had come rushing in upon him, and he thought it would be more likely, perhaps, to bring him cash than the drama. So he had begun sketching out the plot with almost as much ardour and joy as he had worked before at his play. People may differ in opinion as to whether this constituted a sufficient reason for leaving Featherstone to drift over the Falls. But then Gerald didn't know about the Falls. We seldom do. But another and better reason was his anxiety about Richard. He was trying to find out the facts before talking with his father. When he was sure of the said facts he spoke out plainly.

Mr. Arlington was grieved, and his pride was evidently hurt; still, not so much grieved as Gerald expected. He evidently seemed to think there must be a certain amount of "wild oats" sown by all young men. He had always shrunk from vice of every description himself, but he had regarded it in other men

with a sort of compassionate disgust and tolerant scorn that did not conduce to a stern condemnation of evil, or to the cultivation of a lofty standard of purity and nobleness, even in those with whom he was most intimate.

Like many other parents, also, he made the mistake of erring on the side of reticence in such matters with regard to his sons. It is a most delicate and difficult thing, no doubt, for a parent to know when and what to say to a child on the subject; but Mr. Arlington had erred in being too reserved.

Yet he once made a remark to his eldest son, just at the critical period when he was emerging from youth into young-manhood, for which that son was ever after grateful to him, and which, simple as it was, did him an amount of good he did not fully understand till years after. "You will find," he said, "as you mix with young men, that proposals will be made to you of a very derogatory character; but if you at once resist them they will not be repeated."

And Gerald felt keenly that his father was giving him credit for intending to live a manly pure life, was taking it for granted not that he needed even to be warned or exhorted against yielding to temptations, but that he merely required a helping word to encourage him in offering that opposition to evil suggestions which he was sure to be ready to give.

If, however, Mr. Arlington had not taken too much for granted in the case of his eldest boy, he saw plainly and painfully enough now that he had done so in regard to Richard especially.

The coarseness which Gerald hinted at vexed him greatly.

"What *is* the reason, Gerald? He had precisely the same advantage as yourself."

"Not quite, father," replied his son. "Richard was too young to know or care about Catherine." (The elder sister who had died.) "While she lived I cannot tell you the wonderful blessing she was to me. It was a terrible loss to Richard never to have known much of his sister."

Mr. Arlington drew a long, heavy sigh. His lost daughter had been idolized by both parents.

"And then, father, mother's health, I think, did not allow her to do as much for Richard as she did for me. And then there were Aunt Caroline's conversations and teachings which Dick never cared for."

His father looked doubtful at this last suggestion, and Gerald went on hurriedly——

"But all the real mischief, I think, began at school. After I left Beachum two or three blackguards came from another school, and

by degrees nearly the whole of the upper forms seem to have become tainted."

"'Pon my word," said Mr. Arlington, "it's wonderful what a deal of harm one or two black sheep may do in a school."

"And those fellows were thoroughly black, I'm convinced," continued Gerald. "They led Richard into all sorts of bad ways. The school, you see, was stronger for evil, I suppose, than his home was for good. I only found all this out lately, or I should have spoken to you sooner, but I thought it better to try all I could myself first."

"Quite right. I will send him on a three-months' trip to Canada and back. That will break the connections he has formed, and give him time to think. There is a very sensible young man going out as surgeon in an emigrant ship chartered by Mr. Grant. He is the son of a director of the Royal Exchange, and will do what he can for Richard, I know. I got him the berth. When your brother comes home, you and he must live together in London somehow or other—at least, for a time."

"I will do anything, father, you think best."

"When do you expect to hear about your play from Mr. Macready, Gerald?"

"I was going to tell you, father. I have a note this morning, appointing me to meet him on Tuesday next."

Mr. Arlington's answer was the usual, "Oh!" It was little more than a grunt, but meant to be kindly.

They rode up to Town together the next morning, till Gerald branched off to Elm Street. When the door of Featherstone's lodgings was opened, he saw, by a glance at the girl's face, something was wrong.

"Is Mr. Featherstone ill again?" he hastily exclaimed.

"N—n—no, Sir, but he's gone!"—and the dirty apron went up to the poor dirty eyes.

"Gone! When?—where?" Gerald's heart sank within him.

"Don't know, Sir—this morning, Sir."

When Gerald had extracted all the particulars he could, he was turning, very dismally, to depart, when the girl called after him.

"Please Sir, there be a letter a-come for him. What's to do with it?"

He went up into the ill-starred artist's deserted rooms. The pictures and gimcracks were all packed away. But the poor little flowers were still in the vase where he had placed them after the reconciliation on Tuesday. He took them, half-faded as they were, wiped them tenderly, and placed them in his bosom, while the

unwashed maid peeped—curious. On the table lay a note directed in Mrs. Featherstone's hand-writing, with the fatal post-mark on it, "Too late."

"The post-master never said anything more true than that," thought Gerald; and, thrusting it into his pocket, he made his way as fast as he could to Mr. Featherstone's.

The wrath of the father, the tears of Leila, the hysterics of the mother can be imagined, not described. Mr. Featherstone found temporary relief in discharging the guilty footman on the spot, and driving off to his counting-house as fast as his fat old horses could get there. Gerald was retiring, sadly enough, from the house, when he heard Leila softly call him, and, turning, he saw her beckon him into the dining room.

"Mr. Arlington," she began, "Mamma wished me to thank"—then she fairly broke down, and, covering her face with her hands, sank on a chair. She was trying hard to restrain her sobs, and speak. But all that Gerald could hear at intervals was, "Oh, Mr. Arlington—that it should all have come to this!"

The memories of the past, the many bright hopes she had been cherishing for the future, were too much for her fortitude. She had risen that morning so very happy. The past seemed to be only a miserable dream. Her brother was to be welcomed home again like the Prodigal Son in the parable, and to give himself up to his noble art, and she would sit and read and work beside him, and write tales for him to illustrate, and they would have those old happy walks together again, but with far higher thoughts and aims in common than before. Those dreams—well, all were vanished now! She had had the same strange unconquerable presentiment as Alfred had been haunted with—that if he did not come now he never would—founded, no doubt, partly on their knowledge of their father's character. But she did not know till that moment how much she had been influenced by this feeling, nor how much she had been living in bright anticipations of his return. The shock of awaking was very great, coming as it did after the excitement of the last few days and her indisposition the day before. Gerald had never seen anyone so unhappy since his mother wept over the dead body of his sister, and to see this beautiful high-hearted girl in such anguish almost unmanned him. He besought her in the tenderest tones to compose herself, and kept uttering incoherent comfort till he hit on the only true consolation, as far as poor Leila at that moment could receive any at all.

"I will go down to Cowes!" he exclaimed, walking to the window. "I'm sure, from what he said, he's gone there—and then,

perhaps, Miss Featherstone—perhaps he will even now come back.”

Mother and daughter caught at the idea with immense gratitude, but little hope. So Gerald went down with the mail that night with Leila's look of thanks haunting him, and returned, as might have been expected, on the Monday—alone; wishing, more than words can tell, he had never left Leila Featherstone's brother for an hour till he was once more safe in her home. Yet when he brought back the sorrowful news to Mrs. Featherstone and her daughter that Alfred, after fair promises and much emotion, had finally given him the slip and gone off in the yacht, he could not help trying to stay their tears by vague hopes that, when the wandering Prodigal had had a brief holiday, he would yet come back. Of course, he gave such excellent reasons for his hopes that, when Mrs. Featherstone sailed out of the room to inspect a new servant (motioning Leila majestically to follow), she repeated her stately thanks, and Leila felt bound to remain a few seconds to do the same. Then Gerald, overcome by her mournful look and tearful eyes, thought he might try and divert her sad thoughts for a few minutes by mentioning that he had an appointment with the great tragedian for that morning. Is it to be wondered at that she looked up with quick eager sympathy, and replied, with a faint blush, to his inquiry whether she would care to hear the verdict:

“Indeed, Mr. Arlington, I shall wish very much to know your fate. We do not leave here till——” Then she stopped in some confusion, fearing she was saying too much. Gerald was again nearly off his balance. He could not help thinking that Leila was feeling very differently about him and his tragedy now to what she was last winter, and then the thought would rush in whether he was not making too great a sacrifice to friendship in leaving Leila Featherstone to Harry's fitful wooing. He hadn't bargained when he gave her up for seeing her under such terribly captivating circumstances, or being thrown again into such intimate and even tender relationship with her. Yet he felt he could have stood all this and not harboured a thought unjust to his friend had that friend continued to manifest the same lofty yet ardent devotion to her which characterized the first few months of his attachment; though the more he saw of the depth and tenderness of Leila's nature, as well as of her intellectual aspirations, the more he doubted if Fortescue either did really appreciate her now, or ever would love her as she deserved.

But while these thoughts were darting through his mind, and he was once more, as we said, on the point of taking the young lady's

hand and passionately demanding an explanation of the state of her affections, Leila averted the crisis by offering the hand in question with a curious mixture of shyness, grateful regard, and characteristic hauteur, and immediately vanishing through the open door. Gerald wended his way in a very tumultuous condition to Lincoln's Inn, while the maiden found herself in her own room, feeling (without clearly comprehending why) as more than once before, that this poetic dreamer, with his mysterious eyes and strangely captivating voice, was wondrous fascinating, and was bringing her young yet weary heart, amid its sorrows, some subtle fragrant breath of rest and peace, as well as of life and power. She still, indeed, cherished a very genuine and romantic admiration for Mr. Fortescue, but the retrospect of her conversations with him was less and less satisfactory. And being, therefore, increasingly averse to think herself bound to admire nobody else, she was the more willing to be grateful to one who not only had striven hard to lead her brother to better paths, but had twined the sweet comfort of a new poetic life with her constrained and dismal home experiences, and who at the same time seemed to be still anxious to make her share in his own poetic dreams.

But were those dreams to be gloriously fulfilled or rudely crushed for ever? If he were unable to get his play performed what would his father naturally think and say? Was he to return to the slavery and spiritual death (as he viewed it) of Leadenhall Street, rendered doubly wretched by the temporary freedom and new life in which he had been revelling? But suppose, indeed, that his play were really acted and then damned!!! . . . Why then, like Cæsar, he would wrap his robe around him and sink to death at the feet of an ungrateful world! . . . Arlington had never realized fully, until he was walking that day to the great actor's chambers, the narrowness of the razor-bridge which so often forms the only junction between the ideal Mount Olympus and the hard, actual "terra firma" on which a man must somehow or other plant his foot if he would bring the ideal down to influence the actual world.

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Gerald had left the Featherstones' house no doubt fully intending to return to it. And he left Mr. Macready's chambers with the same intention, full of exulting gladness, for he had heard there words of praise from the great tragedian concerning his drama, and above all, a promise which made him wild with joy and most delusive expectation.

"I shall recommend it to Mr. ——" (the manager of the theatre where he was then performing), "and if he accepts it, Mr. Arlington,

I shall be very glad to perform in it." Yes, it was no dream, this was the verdict. Surely, then, the victory had now been gained for ever—the great life battle fought and won, with a triumphant career of power and fame opened up to him that should have no end but death. For if a man of such undoubted genius and long experience as Mr. Macready could not only speak of his play thus highly and be willing to recommend it to the manager of ——— Theatre, but actually be ready to commit his own great reputation to the enterprise of performing in it, how could it help being successful? And would not that bring him an independent livelihood, as well as all else he asked for?

Are the great life battles, then, fought and won by sitting at a desk and writing? Well, mighty deeds *are* done by writing, no doubt. Words *are* a tremendous power. Luther's, we are told, were "half battles." Milton did something in "Defence of the People of England" by writing. But then, Luther and Milton were Luther and Milton.

Yet a young man who can win the public ear, and, through a noble actor, fascinate the public heart, would he not already be a power in the State? No—not a bit of it. But he would then have planted his foot on the first step of the ladder, and if he can climb—why then——

Such a view of the case, however, as this would have been rather amazing to poor Gerald. Still more an opinion that might at the same time have been volunteered—viz., that a successful leader in the "Times" or "Morning Chronicle," would have been a far more likely opening in the Great Britain of that day to the power and reputation for which he craved than the finest tragedy. The youth thought men were formed for refined enjoyment in all things Beautiful, for divine delights in Music, Poetry, and Art; and that their heaven-born instincts would impel them, if gradually, yet irresistibly to bend beneath a true artist-poet's sceptre, and work with him in substituting for all ugliness, discord, and disorder,—beauty, order, and peace.

Were not Shakespeare and those gods of his idolatry, Goethe and Schiller, mighty powers on the earth? What a world-wide influence might not Byron have wielded had he but been able to learn that great lesson whereof Goethe speaks—viz., "Life, in the true sense of the term, can be said to begin only with RENUNCIATION?"

Men wrangle and fight, thought Gerald, and bury themselves in Mammon-holes, in sensuality, in worldliness, only because the higher influences of Art, of the Beautiful in all its thousand forms,

are not fairly brought to bear upon them. This creed he believed in with all the passionate fervour of a martyr ready to die for his belief. Was the man born altogether in a wrong latitude? Should he not have been cradled in Weimar, Athens, or Florence? It was a queer place, this London, for such dreams. But Nature is always graciously seeking to supplement us. Doubtless, modern England needs men with faith in Art, in "the Beautiful."

So it might have been well for London if it could have looked kindly on the young gentleman who that day left the arch-magician's sanctuary in Lincoln's Inn with feelings of intense and overflowing happiness. But it might be matter for curious inquiry whether the profoundly grateful, as well as reverent, way in which he pressed the tragedian's hand at parting, and looked up in his face, awoke in that gentleman's bosom some slight remorse; for well he knew how poor a chance existed of the manager's consenting to bring out a new five-act tragedy, or indeed a legitimate drama of any kind.

The miserable monopoly of the two big houses, Covent Garden and Drury Lane, had been blighting the English stage for years, and it had nearly reached, at that time, its lowest depths of degradation. Now, Mr. Macready, with the true instinct of genius, saw the inherent merit of Gerald's production amid its many faults, and seemed also to feel a sincere interest in the enthusiastic young author. In spite of the labour he must have given to fit it for the stage, he would have been most thankful to have aided in placing it worthily before an audience, if only to have exchanged the wretched trash in which he was then too often compelled to appear, for the noble and passionate character of the hero of this drama. But in the then condition of the English theatres, the great actor knew there was as little hope for the author as for himself when he kindly assured Gerald that he "would perform in it *if Mr. B—— accepted it.*" Yet it was all he *could* say, and therefore he said it. So Gerald walked away through Lincoln's Inn and Red Lion Square with the words of his favourite German sounding through his brain, not in the desponding gloom which enveloped the soul of him who composed them, and too often, heretofore, of the youth who was now repeating them to himself, but with all the fresh buoyant hope and consciousness of power which whispered to his deceived and romantic heart that he might achieve a happier fate than Schiller's, and live, not to weep over the melancholy failure of *his* glorious "*Idealen*," but to *realize* them all in the bright career that now lay opening before him. . . . Thus ran the song ("*Es dehnte mit*," &c.), as he did it roughly into English

while he walked along, reciting to himself with secret and enthusiastic joy:—

“ A mighty all-embracing force
His shackled breast inspired
To start upon the paths of Life,
With glorious purpose fired ;
To live in noble deed and thrilling word,
In sculpture's heavenly art, and strings by music stirred.

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How sprang the youth with courage winged,
In all the madness of his joy,
(Uncurbed as yet by cruel cares)
To give his ardent powers employ.”

And then came the beautiful verse, “ *Wie tanzte vor des Lebens Wagen,*” &c.

“ Aye ! ” he exclaimed—

“ Behold before the Car of Life
How dance th' angelic company !
See Love with all its sweet reward,
And Fortune with its golden wreath,
And Fame with radiant starry crown,
And Truth that shines on all beneath
Like Sun in mid-day splendour.”

“ Yes, yes, ye glorious heavens above ! ” he whispered to himself as he looked upwards, seeming to expect he should behold those beautiful angels floating bodily there, “ I'll win them *all* ! and praise the glorious Giver evermore.”

Those brilliant and romantic but rather unseasonable dreams lasted till he got to Russell Square ; and then, for one moment, there came another thought, sweeter, brighter far. Whom was he going to tell of his success ? Aye, one moment of intense gladness, and then his pace slackened, and he stopped. There rose up before him, stern and sad and pleading, the image of his friend * * *

Mother and daughter meanwhile had been transacting their business in Oxford Street and elsewhere, with hurried step, and returned, palpitating with hope, only to be again disappointed.

“ No, Mr. Alfred has not yet arrived, ma'am ; but I have been to the ‘ White Horse Cellar,’ ma'am, and there's a coach from Portsmouth gets in about 5 o'clock.”

So they lunched, and waited. The carriage was ordered at half-past four. Leila sat in the drawing-room, trying to read “ *Gibbon's Decline and Fall* ; ” really humming a tune from “ *La Sonnambula*,” and beating time with her foot—listening—listening. Was she

listening for some other step as well as that of Alfred? If she were, it was, could be, only because of the generous interest somebody else had shown in her brother. But she glanced more than once at her watch. And as the time wore on, and Gerald came not, she drew proudly into herself, and thought how weakly he was abandoning the path of humble duty in Leadenhall Street for a phantom chase of poetic dreaming, that could only end in plunging him into a morass. And then she thought, perhaps he may have been detained. He evidently very much wished to come. And then the words which she had once heard applied to Gerald by Harry, would keep sounding ominously in her ear, and they were the words of a certain Book, and they kept murmuring this: "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel."

Then the image of Mr. Fortescue rose strong and stately before her. But soon every other thought was swept away by a passionate craving to see her brother safe once again at home. And then she heard a knock, and flew furtively to the window blinds. It was not Alfred, nor Mr. Arlington, only a boy with a note from a gentleman to Miss Featherstone. She looked at it shyly, opened it slowly, and with the faintest little blush, read it at a glance, and flung it on the table, with something between a sigh and a sneer. The note simply stated the tragedian's opinion of Gerald's drama, and the conditional promise he had given of acting in it if he could get it accepted, adding that he, the writer, was obliged, with great regret, to leave London without calling in Portland Place; and concluding with words of hope and comfort about Alfred. Should the latter not soon return, and should there be any opening by which he could be of the slightest use to any of the family, he should be only too deeply thankful to avail himself of it. He entreated her to let him know in such case, and remained—(yes, he thought he might just add this)—"dear Miss Featherstone, gratefully yours, Gerald Arlington."

Gratefully? Yes. Did he not owe her a glimpse into Paradise; and though he might not enter it, ought he not to thank her for it? Well, who knows? probably he was far nearer Heaven in making that sacrifice to friendship, than even if he had been leaving Portland Place the accepted lover of his beautiful angel. She, meanwhile, stood looking at the note, as it lay on the table, with erect head, dilated nostril, fixedly. Then she took it up again, read it, re-read it, hid it away with a sigh, and never knew before how much she had lately cared for the writer. Then, blushing indignantly at the thoughts in her heart, she proudly, fiercely, tore the note to pieces, and flung them into the grate.

When Mrs. Featherstone and her daughter had waited in Piccadilly till the Portsmouth coach came in, but with it no son nor brother, and the word "Home" passed in solemn and sonorous accents from her poor mother's lips, the dark shadow fell again over Leila's soul; and the small circle of three sat that evening in their melancholy, beautiful home at Wimbledon in silence and in gloom. Afterwards, and for many a day, when "hope deferred" for her brother's return had wholly sickened and died, Leila lived only in such light as she strove desperately to bring around her parents' hearts—light which, when she sought it from Heaven in accordance with her mother's stern Calvinistic training, too often she seemed to seek in vain. Then her thoughts flew back for consolation and strength to earth. She knew that Cambridge men were fast leaving the banks of the Cam, but none she cared about found their way to Wimbledon. Flowers, one of Heaven's best gifts to a pure and sorrowing heart, were a great enjoyment; hard study, and above all, her piano, her chief resource.

Music with her was a passion; and, happily, she had those natural gifts for it (instrumentally, not vocally) which enabled her to throw her whole soul into it, and to find both in the great Masters, and in her own wild improvisations (which were often full of beauty), a constant source of happiness. Without this relief, during long months and years of trial, her health would probably have given way, and the restless, aspiring, spirit have prematurely fretted itself into the rest of the grave.

Mr. Arlington was amiable when the result of the momentous interview with Mr. Macready was announced.

Business matters, as well as public affairs, were, on the whole, still brightening a little. A part of the great railway had been opened amid enthusiastic cheers, feasting, and congratulatory speeches. That other still greater enterprise of bridging the Atlantic with steam-ships was proceeding with dogged British determination, in spite of the learned but now humiliated professors. And a couple more fine vessels destined for the New York line were fast approaching completion in Messrs. Wigram and Green's ship-yard at Blackwall. Hence, Mr. Arlington was still disposed to take a cheerful view of matters, and reflected that after all Gerald might prove to be a genius of some sort; and if he was not to rise in the City, might he not get into Parliament, and grasp the honours which he himself had declined?

Very great was Mr. Arlington's hereditary love and honour for Chatham and Fox. If his son really manifested great ability, and

kept from drinking, gambling, &c., he might become—who could tell? We all have our dreams—even wise, grey-headed fathers.

So Gerald Arlington remained for a time at Hartland house, writing scraps of poetry and tales, reading Byron and Byron's life, Tennyson, "Wilhelm Meister," Schiller's "Die Ideale," "Contarini Fleming," and Bulwer, "softly floating on his tuneful way," singing and dreaming. It was "Adonais" within sight of London smoke. Never, probably, since Adam dawdled about in Paradise, was man happier in his way than Gerald those few months, save when tumultuous fervent longings for his Eve broke the stern fetters in which he usually bound them.

Harry came once to see him and "rowed" him vehemently for not working hard at "Thucydides, Quintilian, Aristotle's Logic and Rhetoric, the 'Differential Calculus,' and all that sort of thing." He continued: "You know you've often told me you haven't a chance of becoming a great orator, poet, and philanthropist, old gentleman, if you don't work like a brick at these things. And, as for all *this* rubbish, Gerry, oh Jupiter!"—and he tossed contemptuously aside the young poet's most cherished effusions. "Now don't be fierce. I only speak, Gerry, because"—and his voice dropped to an insinuating whisper with that delightfully caustic, yet comic smile, which had often disarmed all kinds of wrath—"because you see, I *know* how much better things you could write if you'd only *work*. Look here! I met a gentleman at G——'s room in St. Catherine's the other day, who enquired very kindly after you. I mean Claude what's-his-name, the artist. Didn't you meet him once at the Featherstone's?"

Poor Gerald thought of somebody who sat beside him that night, and answered, with constraint, "Yes."

"Well, he spoke with genuine interest about you, and of what he had since heard about you, I think from that great tragic gun, Macready. And then he went on so. Oh! I wish you had heard him."

"Tell me all you can. I *should* like to know."

Harry produced his pocket-book.

"I made a few notes for your benefit when I got home, so, if you insist, I'll see what I can make of them. Hum—ha—well, he said you had a true and noble conception of the province and power of art—and that will make you proud, Johnny—but, he added, he didn't believe you or any young man had a notion of the stern wrestlings of the spirit, and tremendously hard work of the brain, which a true artist must go through if he would be faithful to his calling. And that should make you humble, Johnny. He spoke

of how young folks (that's you) were right, nobly right, in believing in the possibility of realizing your beautiful ideals in the world, and of bringing harmony and beauty out of discord and strife, and didn't he say it all so eloquently that we sat listening like Scotchmen to the bagpipes! But he added that the tendency of giving oneself up to such a life, unless you worked intensely hard, and also mingled in the rough realities of life, was to make a man sentimental and flabby, unfit to lead and elevate his age. There—I can't make out any more."

"You're a trump to have got all that! It's worth a bushel of friends' flattery or doctors' drugs. Though *my* doctor's physic is priceless. Now, tell us all about yourself."

"All right. But tell me first why *you* look so jaded and dreamy, black under the eyes. Going to kill yourself with poetry, sentiment, and love? What's the matter with you, my poet? I *shall* have to drug you."

"Pooh! nothing. I was up half the night, galloping over Wanstead Flats and Epping Forest by moonlight. That's all."

Harry lifted up his hands in amazement. "Well, you are a—moon-calf."

"Grandest fun going, my doctor. That's life, if you please."

"Yes, yes, Gerald, all that would be splendid if it *was* fun—if, in fact, you had any fun left in you. But you haven't, and you'll never write anything worth reading—indeed, I doubt if you'll ever do anything worth doing, if you can't get back that old spirit of fun or humour, or whatever you call it——"

"Harry—I *can't*," replied Gerald, emphatically and dismally. "It's no good trying. Life does seem to me so very serious—so horribly stern. It's quite enough to be cheerful, without pretending to be merry. Nobody in earnest can have much fun in them, I fancy; at least I can't understand how they manage it, except now and then."

"Then you don't think I'm one of the earnest folks when I chaff my Gerry," said Fortescue, "and make him laugh like a Christian. Remember, none of the beasts can laugh except the hyæna."

"I don't think you're your best self then, I must allow, though it's very jolly and refreshing to hear you, my doctor, and greatly as I enjoy the weakness it is to be feared I mourn over your fallen state at such times. Our Puritan forefathers didn't laugh much, I trow. Fancy Cromwell and his Ironsides having any fun in them."

Harry seemed considerably amused at this view of things, though he gave a great sigh when he had done laughing, and Gerald was

smiling a little, though he evidently suspected most laughter to be "the crackling of thorns" under an *empty* pot.

"But come, old fellow," remarked Arlington, presently. "Give us your own experiences. You make a deal too much talk about *me*. What have you been doing for your own salvation?"

So then Harry told his friend that he had arranged with an eminent surgeon at the hospital in London where Richard Arlington was attending, to take him as a pupil, and that he was to begin walking the said hospital next October.

"I shall leave Cambridge, gladly and sadly, Gerry, but it is a bad habit to dwell on the past. 'Hark forward's' the cry!"

Then he described how he was reading medicine and surgery, and how the study thereof grew more and more fascinating.

"You see, Gerry, I do believe in health. I believe the '*corpus sanum*' has a vast deal to do with the '*mens conscia recti*.' And I have a profound faith in God's will to have health in His universe, not disease. Between ourselves, you know, there's a vast deal of nonsense talked by the parsons and goody-folk about God's dispensations and chastisements, and 'submission to God's will,' and so forth, when the poor fools whom they try to comfort or humble in this fashion have only themselves to thank for it. If God cares about us at all, I'm certain He wishes us to be healthy and not sick—to mind the laws of nature, and not to break them as if He hadn't made them. Doesn't He love order, if He loves anything? and what is disease, I should like to know, but disorder?"

"I suppose that's all very true. And yet I fancy you might easily make false gods out of your '*Health*,' and '*Order*,' and '*Nature*,' Harry."

"For why?" inquired the doctor.

"Clearly because enthusiastic doctors, from their constant studies and work, must be tempted to worship health—and after all there are much finer things than that—and if you once get an idol you are sure to sacrifice to it what is far nobler than the thing itself."

"You speak like a prophet, you think like a sage. It is very surprising in one of your age, Gerry—as you used to remark. But mind *you* don't make a Moloch of Art, while you warn me against my 'fond idolatry.' Look at that poor devil, Featherstone, what good does Art do for him?"

"What good——! why it's the only thing that lifts him above the state of hog. See how it raised and purified him when he first gave himself up to it. Its just the one ennobling point in his nature—just the fulcrum by which, I believe in my heart, we might

yet lift him out of his slough—if anything would. I only fear he's past lifting now by any lever, poor beggar——"

"But what about that young destroying swan-necked beauty, Featherstone's slim little sister?" said Fortescue. "God forgive her; she's a deadly serpent to me."

"Oh, she was all right when I last heard of her. Going to call?"

"Not I."

Gerald turned round, and glared upon Fortescue with a look of savage astonishment.

"What do you mean?" he managed to ask at length. Harry laid hold of Gerald's arm with the grip of a blacksmith.

"Look here. Her father spoke to me before I left town." His brows lowered and all the latent ruffian gleamed from his eyes. "I know ~~now~~ how men come to kill each other! I'll never let that man speak to me again, till I am able to look him in the face, and know that I have a right to ask his daughter to be my wife. . . . And—and—it will be years—*Years!*—before I can do that. My uncle has vowed he'll cut me off with a hundred the day I leave Cambridge unordained—years, Gerald, years before I can earn enough. And, oh, ye gods! she is so lovely, and as clever as she is fair. There will be scores of fellows courting her . . . Her father's rich—and every aristocratic, smug, well-to-do black-guard—Gerry, Gerry, pity me!"

And the strong man hid his face in his hands, then suddenly whirled himself round, caught Gerald's hand and said:

"But you'll watch for me, Gerry, you'll be able to see her—speak for me—won't you, Gerry? I can live on hope for years."

Gerald *could not* answer.

"Speak, man, speak! for the love of heaven! You don't want her yourself! no, no, I know you don't."

"Want her myself," at length said Gerald, slowly, with "ghastly grin" of mixed scorn and compassion. "No, my Hal, I'm not quite such a spooney as you." (Then with his old smile) "I can't afford to let *my* mind run on such trumpery. Art, art, I tell you, oh, my poor frantic Saadi, Art, as I have told you before, Art is my mistress!" But Fortescue looked at him gloomily, and the friends separated on rather uncomfortable terms. Happy it would have been for both of them, if Gerald had but possessed enough wisdom and presence of mind to have said—"Well, if you hadn't put up for her, Harry, no doubt I should. I think her very charming, and mean to keep out of her way. Of course I'm not going to cut you out,—easily as I might do it, equally of course, if I chose,

you dear, blessed old moon-calf." And so, with a laugh and a hearty pressure of the hand, they would have mutually understood each other, and no harm would have been done.

Happy also, says a right-minded philosophic parent, if Gerald could have added a word as to "the absurdity, not to say, impropriety, of courting, and making themselves miserable, about a girl whom they had neither of them the slightest chance of asking in marriage for years to come, and who was almost certain in the meantime to be carried off by some more fortunate suitor. They were both too young, Gerry ought therefore to have remarked, for such nonsense." Why didn't he think, at all events, of finishing up with a reference to his beloved ancient Germans, "*Qui diutissime, &c.*," and have concluded with saying:

"Harry, old boy, we were friends long before we knew this girl. We won't let a woman break up that which is worth more than most things that life can give, to wit, a genuine, tough old friendship, begun when we were boys, and strengthening as we have grown."

Oh! how easy it is for wise grey-headed men to see and enforce the right conduct upon hot-blooded youth. But who is ever wise enough in his own youth either to see or to act accordingly? In fact, does *anybody* profit by others' experience? Well says the proverb, "If things were to be done twice, all would be well."

So for want of grey-headed wisdom, the young fools parted in folly. But after a time, with characteristic resolution, Master Harry thrust his suspicions aside, and, ere long, recovered all his old faith in the friend who deserved something better at his hands than even the heartiest trust he could give him. Gerald was always ready for a "forgive and forget" with most people, especially, of course, with Harry, so they soon shook hands, metaphorically, again in "most beautiful letters!"

Later in the summer, Mr. and Mrs. Arlington, with Miss Tylney, having gone to Hastings, Gerald accompanied Fortescue in a short walking tour, through Sussex, the New Forest, and part of Dorsetshire, in the course of which Gerald found himself, one bright starlight night, standing on one side of a grave in a churchyard at Beachum. His friend stood on the other side, silent, uncovered; and seemed to be inwardly praying. The monotonous dash of the waves on the distant beach were the only sounds that broke the hush of night. At length Harry stretched out his hand across the grave to Gerry, saying: "May the Lord help me to remember you, father, and all your words." Then they went back to their inn, silently as they came.

"Remember?" Yes. Will not memory, for many of us, be the true hell hereafter?

Harry's father—that father's life and words—his grave—were not matters to be forgotten in a day. How is it we so often fail to recollect the "right thing" *at the right time*? We remember clearly enough before, and *after*.

The next day Gerald and Harry took a long row, and had a bathe from the boat, a mile or two out at sea; previous to which last operation, however, Gerald proposed they should upset the boat and see how they would act, and be able to swim in their clothes on a certain emergency. Harry, of course, was charmed with the idea, and they only refrained on reflecting that in all probability they should irrecoverably spoil their watches! Then, the day after, they got the master at Gerry's old school to give the boys a holiday, and played a game of cricket with them on the downs, when Harry astonished them with his terrific bowling, and had to be toned down; and Gerry made some wonderful swipes, but was finally caught out by a smart lad, who was immensely cheered in consequence. Hare and hounds followed, with a brilliant run; and then a pic-nic feast among the gorse bushes. The boys, of course, were all in high spirits, and long remembered that holiday; but it is to be feared the hearts of their visitors were sometimes heavy with exceeding longings to be boys themselves once again.

It so happened that Harry met Miss Featherstone once that vacation, and on one of the most dangerous occasions for susceptible hearts—viz., a wedding, where his sister reluctantly figured as a bridesmaid to gratify a dear old friend. Leila for some time had been feeling more than usually depressed. Her brother's conduct was weighing heavily on her heart, and her home was dull and dreary. In her loneliness she had sometimes ardently longed to hear Harry Fortescue's manly tones of cheery hope and benevolent aspiration, or to know why Gerald Arlington had never called since they parted at the Wimbledon ball. But she knew she was not to give "any encouragement" at present to Mr. Fortescue under pain of that paternal displeasure which she had been brought up from childhood to fear as the heaviest of all calamities. So when she, also decked as a bridesmaid, met him at the wedding, looking of course more charming than ever, the consciousness of a strange happiness and of much of the old fascination in Harry's presence fell upon her and made her set a double guard on her manner towards him, while her lover, trembling with excitement, argued with himself that if she cared ever so little for him she would be sure, in spite of hostile papa and mamma, to give him a few kind words

to live on for the next year or two. When he did get them they were so different from what he wanted that his suspicions of Gerry strengthened, and then he thought—why, if *he*, Gerry, really loved her, how *could* she help being in love with him? “But then, confound it!” he exclaimed that night to a London lamp-post, “why couldn’t the man *tell* me so and have done with it? That’s the meaning of it all and no mistake. She’s in love with him and he with her, and so she don’t care a rap for me. Confound all love-making! . . . But she needn’t have been so infernally contemptuous over it; she cared for me once, I’ll swear!”

Blind beetle as he was, Fortescue now decided that “Leila, the witch,” was arrogant and cold, or was certainly in love, if not with Gerald then with some other fellow, and with proud indifference in return he met what he thought was her proud disdain. So, grinding his teeth, the poor fellow went up to London and entered at the hospital, began his attendance at lectures, and his work in the dissecting-room, but began it more utterly hopeless, more wrathful with all women in general (Nelly alone excepted) and with Miss Featherstone in particular, more thoroughly given up to a low, material view of existence, more entirely sceptical as to truths and memories once associated so brightly, lovingly, with his father’s voice and looks, than ever in his life before. In short, he was exactly in the right state to fraternise with the medical students of that generation, such as too many of them then were, in the great metropolitan medical schools.

Leila, on her part, went home feeling more perplexed with the mysteries of life than usual; sometimes very angry with herself for not speaking more kindly to Mr. Fortescue, sometimes very indignant with him for not paying her more attention, altogether very much out of temper with everybody, yet wholly ignorant of the terrible mischief which the paternal commands laid upon her were working for her hapless lover.

Her piano, as heretofore, but especially ever since that discourse with Gerald Arlington about Art and “Play,” was still her great resource. She practised unweariedly, and composed no end of “variations” on Scotch and Irish melodies; others besides herself rejoiced in her playing; yet it could not altogether cure the heart-ache.

But there was one blessing still awaiting her—somewhere perhaps for that unhappy lover of hers also—though a long way off. She had been allowed by her parents again to accept a pressing invitation from Ellen Fortescue to Neville Court, on their receiving, as once before, a private assurance from that lady that the dangerous

Mr. Fortescue should not be invited, or, indeed, permitted to visit its sacred precincts during their daughter's stay.

Mr. Featherstone, at the constant and urgent instigation of his wife, supported by Leila, made several indirect overtures to Alfred to come back to the paternal roof; but even if they had not involved something like confession and apology as a condition of his return, which he swore he would never make, Alfred was now too far sunk in loose and sottish ways to endure the thought of ever living with his parents and sister again.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"YES, darling, refreshment and a wonderful peace are provided for those who are chastened because they are loved, when the time comes for them to rest from the Great Refiner's scorching fire." So said Miss Fortescue to her young visitor as they strolled among the rhododendron bushes the morning after Leila's arrival.

Poor Leila lived for months on the prospect of a visit to Neville Court till she got there, and then laid her weary head on Ellen's loving bosom in such deep thankfulness and peace as only those can experience who have long been in conflict or pain. All the arrangements at Miss Fortescue's mansion were admirably adapted for the object to which she had devoted her life. She had looked round her large, beautiful house and grounds, and then at the sallow faces and pining hearts of her poor sisters in the great Babylon toiling as governesses or dressmakers, and she resolved to make her home a place where a few of them at least might rest now and then on their weary pilgrimage to the "Better Land." This, she thought, would be the best way of consecrating the blessings of Providence to a purpose worthy of Him who had bestowed them, and she thought she might thus also have some sweet little tales to tell one who was waiting for her in that Land. She didn't doubt he was still employed, if not exactly in such enterprises as that in which he heroically lost his life, yet in beneficent labours of some kind or other in heaven; and she longed to show him day by day she was working in a similar spirit while yet on earth. Hence, while Miss Fortescue always went for an excursion to the seaside

or on the Continent, during about two months in the year to keep her own spirit fresh and braced both for work and enjoyment, she was accustomed during the remaining ten months to have at Neville Court, for a few weeks or days, according to circumstances, a succession of over-wrought governesses or friendless, hardworking young milliners, dressmakers, and so forth, with whom she had become acquainted through her friends in London, or through a benevolent metropolitan clergyman, brother to the incumbent of her own parish. Then she generally contrived to have Miss Tylney, or Leila, or some other educated, agreeable ladies to help to make a cheerful circle and keep up an atmosphere of artistic influences, while a simple, unaffected piety gave its peaceful elevated tone to the whole establishment.

She had built a fine glass-roofed hall for winter concerts and dances, in which also her guests could take refuge from the weather if needful during out-door festivities. Although there were a few magnificent tropical plants and trees in it, the effect of music was singularly good owing to the care taken in rounding off corners. Music, drawing, a great supply of books—new and old, various games and delightful conversation—the feeling that you might do just as you liked and were under no compulsion, except that of attending punctually at meal times (for utter lawlessness she well knew was not refreshing); above all, the gentle, genial loving spirit of the mistress of the household gave a wonderful charm to a sojourn at “The Garden of Eden,” as Neville Court was usually denominated among its privileged London visitors. And though the contrast no doubt was often dreary enough when those visitors returned to the huge metropolis, yet they were at once strengthened for present burdens and “saved by hope” for the future—not the hope merely of coming there again some day, though that was a continual joy to many of them, but also of coming some day to one of the “many mansions” in a Father’s House, of which Neville Court seemed to them a bright prophecy; that house from which (if once entered) they believed they would “go out no more.”

“Lilybell,” said Miss Fortescue, one day soon after the former had arrived, as they sat in a certain arbour already familiar to the reader, while Miss Tylney was walking up and down the lawn with two very pale young ladies in black, recently imported from the neighbourhood of Bloomsbury Square, “attend, my dear,—Miss Tylney has mentioned such a capital idea which she said her nephew, Gerald Arlington, had suggested to her one day when she was describing our doings down here. He says that dramatic representations are generally so theatrical—so much done for mere show

and, therefore, so formal and constrained—besides, it is generally mere acting for money, all which, complaineth he, is very wretched, and ought to be resisted. Children don't act in that way, and their dramatic performances are as incessant as they are charming and unaffected. We want simply to clothe in flesh and blood the poet's conceptions, you see, my Lily, and to realize his ideal."

"Equally profound and interesting, fair lady," replied her pensive visitor. "Pray go on."

"Well, so Caroline says we are to act portions of some of Shakespeare's plays, walking about the grounds—not as if they were plays, you understand, with spectators to look on, but as if for the time being we were really transformed into his characters, and had got into some other world where they were all living realities."

"Oh, that does sound very charming," exclaimed her listener, lifting her head languidly from the mossy back of the seat on which she was reclining. "But I could never learn my part."

"You may all have books, if you please, and take furtive glances at them behind the shrubs. And we think of beginning with 'As You Like It,' because the lawn and shrubbery will do so famously for the sweet Forest of Ardennes. And then you see, Lilybell, we are to stroll about quite unconcernedly, but especially to avoid any exertion or demonstration beyond that which comes quite naturally to us from imagining ourselves totally different beings from what we are."

"I am afraid it will require a vast deal of imagination, dear Miss Fortescue."

"Oh! but Shakespere helps us so wonderfully, that if we only study our parts a little carefully in our own rooms, we shall soon be quite inspired, I expect. And then Mrs. Jamieson's beautiful 'Characteristics of Woman' are full of inspiration. You have a great deal more of that commodity, imagination, you beloved little puss, than I have; and even I can already fancy myself Celia or Touchstone." Then, as she caressed the beautiful silky head and soft face which she had quietly drawn down to her own, she whispered, "Think what a delightful healing power this complete change of thoughts and this play of the imagination will exert on the minds of those dear jaded Misses Brookfield." That was quite enough to make Leila enter heartily into the plan, for it made her think how exactly this was what formerly brought such comfort to her own heart, when, once upon a time, far back in the past, that youthful Perseus had alighted beside her, and, after emancipating herself, had bade her make artistic influences move "o'er the waters wild"

for the redemption of others, at the bidding of conscience and in the service of love.

"But we will say nothing about it to them, you know, Lily" (pointing to the pale young ladies) "until they are a little more refreshed by this pure bracing air and your delicious playing."

"And your unparalleled singing," interposed Leila.

"And then, don't you see," continued Ellen, "we will begin by reading it aloud in parts, so that they shall get interested in it, and long to realize it before we suggest the acting."

"Oh, capital! You *are* a splendid convalescent-hospital-sister-of-mercy-and-head-nurse kind of a saint, dearest Ellen. I declare I'll go and study the costumes in that old book of yours at once." (Kisses her, and about to exit, singing "Begone, dull care!")

"Stop one minute, Lilybell," said Miss Fortescue, "I want to tell you about my little maid Jessy, that you may say a good word to her when she comes to do your hair to-night. You know what a dear, good little creature she is. Well, it seems that youth whom you once saw as a merry boy when we called that day on her mother, the son of the drunken brickmaker, is actually persecuting her with his rough rustic attentions, and she wants strengthening to refuse to keep 'company with him,' as their phrase goes; at all events at present. It is very desirable she should not have her tone of mind and character lowered you perceive, my child, by the influences to which she would be exposed if she consorted with him and his family; and she is so exceedingly amiable and soft that she would be in great danger of sinking to his and their level, instead of raising him to hers."

"I comprehend, my liege lady," answered Leila, making a curtsy. "Any further commands? Has the father, by-the-bye, continued to reform his tipsy self since your last account?"

"Not uniformly, I fear. He is better, but John (coachman) told me he saw both father and son the other evening singing and drinking in a public-house. Oh, those wretched tap-rooms!"

"Yes, but I have heard your brother, Ellen, say the men who go there must have company, and that the fault is in their having no other place where they can meet their friends."

"True, I know he says that, but he don't say what is to be done instead, and I am sure I don't know. It's very sad for their families, I know that."

"Poor little Jessy. I should think she has need of friends, indeed, now that her poor mother is gone, and no father or brother to take care of her. What a sweet face and expression she herself has."

"Yes, but she is a little too vain of her prettiness, I fear, and you must strengthen her against that weakness also. I hope I may always be able to shield and guide her myself, by Divine help; but sometimes I dread the responsibility, and am weak and heartless enough to wish—no, not that exactly.—*Allons ! aux costumes !*"

Though sorely against her inclination, Ellen generally resisted the temptation to speak a word for her brother to Leila Featherstone, feeling, of course, that she was on her honour to Mr. and Mrs. Featherstone. Once, indeed, in momentary forgetfulness, she said something of hope that one day Leila might be her sister in actual truth, and not merely by a figure of affectionate speech. But Leila looked wild and distressed, answering—

"Dearest, I want to get rid of all those kind of thoughts till my father and mother—I feel so utterly bewildered—I believe I ought not to think at all on the subject at present."

"Yes, my darling, I understand—forgive me—it was quite an accidental mistake of mine. You *shall* be at peace. It is far best as you say. Let us ask the Misses Brookfield if they would like a drive before tea. You haven't been to Leith Hill, I declare, since you came this time, Lily. The views will be lovely this afternoon. How exquisitely that thrush is singing. Come."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE great tragedian's engagement at — Theatre had come abruptly to an end. True-hearted gentleman though he was, his fiery nature could not brook the insults deliberately offered him there to drive him to resign, and with *his* fall all the young poet's hopes came to the ground also. The drama was returned to him with unfeigned regret and friendly words of genuine artistic sympathy. But what was anyone's, even Macready's sympathy, worth to a man whose whole life-dream was shattered by this blow! Gerald felt as if he should never care to look on the sunshine again. But perhaps he was mistaken.

A sanguine theatrical friend suggested to him that he might at least try the manager of the rival establishment; and the drowning man caught at the straw. So then came a visit of "forlorn hope" to

the manager and lessee of Covent Garden Theatre, where nothing but "spectacle" and burlesque was patronized, and who amused the gloomy author for a little time with very fair words and polite generalities, until his own patience and his father's were worn out. Thereupon father and son met once more in hostile array. Business was still in a tolerably hopeful condition. Mr. Featherstone had been persuaded to join Mr. Arlington in a large hemp and tallow speculation, he bringing the capital while Mr. Arlington found the brains. The shares both of Railway and Steam Navigation Companies were going up like wild-fire; and Mr. Arlington, had just succeeded in one other object, he long had at heart, viz., in getting all the Fire Insurance Companies of the metropolis to join in organizing one common "London Fire Brigade." The new basin of the London Docks, which he had so pertinaciously contended for during many years, was at last completed, and had proved a great success. Nevertheless, all this did not make Mr. Arlington one whit less determined not to let his son live an idle literary life, which he felt sure could only be prolific of all kinds of mischief. But he was quite willing to offer Gerald some other occupation which he hoped might be more interesting to him than ship-brokering, and at the same time leave him sufficient leisure for literary composition and study. He found three or four excellent openings, and duly laid them one after another before the heart-sick poet.

Gerald asked for one more brief delay. He set to work and developed his play according to the ideas which had crowded his mind while writing it, into a dramatic romance, giving it the complete form, which the exigencies of a composition for the stage previously forbade. That noble drama, "Philip Van Artevelde," had long been his ideal in this department, and he wrote with joy. When his labours were finished, he almost exulted in the disappointment which had driven him to attempt re-writing his conceptions in their more fully-matured aspect. Then came two or three weeks' illness, as a natural result of working day and night in a state of frantic excitement. Immediately on recovering, he took his manuscript to an eminent publisher, whose reader graciously approved, and soon it was actually in print. For a few weeks Gerald was in the seventh heavens. Friends were amazed and delighted. Leila Featherstone read it with a rapt interest and admiration, while every now and then she made wild, scornful criticisms by way of protest against her own enthusiasm. In vain. She was fairly carried away in spite of herself, and closed the book when, after three hours consecutive reading, she arrived at the end,

with a passionate burst of tears, which she was equally unable to resist or comprehend. But she knew well in her secret heart how much she wished the author would call and talk to her once again of *Æsthetic* culture.

A few second-rate journals and reviews discerned and praised the merits of the dramatic romance, the higher-class publications had no time to do so,—glanced as it, approved, were puzzled, and with “faint praise” dismissed the production of an unknown man.

But it was capital game for the rest. Moreover, it so happened that Bob Nicholson’s “Weekly Snarler” was just then in want of a few more victims.

Bob went on the judicious principle of giving praise to works sent for review in just such a proportion as would prevent the public saying no books were ever praised. It is perhaps only reasonable that critics should be allowed to praise and blame alternately in the course of the same review, and to limit the supply of either commodity in a tolerably fixed ratio. For a critic may easily lose reputation for sound judgment and discrimination if he gives habitually, or even occasionally, considerably more praise than censure. But Bob practised the “alternate” system on a vaster scale. He snarled and slashed as the general rule, but grudgingly made an exception in favour of about ten per cent. of his authors. As ill-luck would have it, when poor Arlington’s romance came on his table he had just used up his small stock of—perhaps we had better not say justice and truthfulness, as spiteful victims said he knew nothing about those virtues—but of clemency. To do him, however, the justice for which he would have scorned himself had he rendered it to others, he felt sorry for a moment when he saw Arlington’s name on the title-page, and actually wished it had come a week sooner; then he could have “cut up” one or two other works instead, and have spared his old acquaintance. But, of course, private weaknesses must not interfere with public duties. It was his duty to make the “Weekly Snarler” sell. It was his pleasure to exercise his peculiar gifts—*judex damnatur*, &c. Authors existed to furnish him with prey. It would never do to let fellows write “rot” without castigating it, or to suffer authors generally to multiply too fast, which they certainly would do if not duly “catted.” The profession of an author was far too tempting,—they had a great deal of pleasure in writing their rubbish, and then in seeing it in print. Nemesis required that they should suffer in proportion, after the publication thereof. So he hardened his heart against them (not that this was a very difficult matter), and satisfied his conscience, about which he had rather more trouble; raised

the reputation of the "Snarler" to an immeasurable height, as the cleverest, severest, most satirical, and therefore most amusing, weekly journal ever started; procured a large circulation at the cost of an indefinite amount of injustice, untruthfulness, and mischief, combined with a certain amount of unquestionable public good. Thus he contrived to realize a nice little income, and as he had kept clear, for the most part, of young men's ordinary vices, he was able to make his widowed mother, to whom he was an exemplary son, extremely comfortable. (He had been jilted when he was three and twenty, and resolved he would never invest in a matrimonial speculation again.)

Under these circumstances "he put Gerry Arlington's drama into his sausage machine, mauled and mangled it like a cobra capella," quoth Neddy Grant to his sisters, with a charming confusion of metaphors, though certainly with considerable truth in both of them. Bob Nicholson no doubt really thought himself very wise and clever, and so he was in a certain way; but after all, object the suffering authors, it is a very inferior power which is required to cut down or cut up a tree compared with that which is needed to make it live and grow. Destruction, though often needful, is not quite so godlike as construction, nor killing as making alive. No doubt it is easier even to burn down a house than to build one ever so small. In reply to all which we would observe that it is certainly a useful work to show up folly and to humble conceit. But then we admit that a true critic will probably take even a greater delight in discovering, encouraging, unfolding what is good and beautiful or capable of becoming so. If he can't or don't do that we fully concede that he's not fit to cut up a book which deserves it. In short, he should have large and genial sympathies as well as a keen scent for error and folly, inasmuch as no man can properly criticise a book unless he understands it, and he can't understand it unless he has a certain amount of sympathy with it, which is true, by-the-bye, of men as well as of books. Perhaps in this connection we may remember how Coleridge once pungently remarked (we quote from memory) "that any fool could be witty at the expense of the Bible, for he had only to bring the sublime and the mean into contrast when the incongruity at once produced the *appearance*, at all events, of wit, and was sure to secure a laugh. Now, the sublime was always to be found in the Scriptures, and any fool could supply his own meanness by way of contrast." The remark is offered to the consideration, not only of certain popular preachers, but even with awe and trembling, *mutatis mutandis*, to that of literary critics. For might not a thousand fools be found, competent to see faults

and follies and hold them up to ridicule, competent also to see excellencies only in the light of their own vulgarity and spitefulness, for one brain that could produce a work with any real life in it? Coleridge supplies another hint also to reviewers—"Oh, lady! we receive but what we give"—and our judgments of the works of others must of course depend greatly on the colour of our own spectacles. Bring your own meanness, ill-nature, headache, envy, or stupidity, O critic, into contact with whatever fine sentiment, pathos, nobleness, may be found in a book, and the result may perhaps be a most amusing critique. But discriminating criticism, wise, appreciative, genial, and yet when needful most severe—ah! that is as invaluable as, possibly, it is rare.

The "Weekly Snarler," then, came out soon after Arlington's "Dramatic Romance" was published with a delightfully caustic, very amusing notice thereof, which made everybody who was anybody laugh and avoid wasting time on the "Romance," and made everybody else afraid to confess he or she had read it, or at least thought it worth anybody else's reading; and so before long nobody asked for it at the libraries. This of course checked the sale, and various smaller sharks took their cue from the great satirist. But "dramatic romances" at the best are unsaleable commodities and require a deal of advertising and a great many literary friends, in and out of reviews, to secure them even a moderate circulation however great their merit. Gerald Arlington couldn't afford the advertising, and did not possess the friends. His publishers, though eminently respectable, didn't care much about "dramas," and were not enterprising in that direction. They looked grave over the "Weekly Snarler," and in due course sent the unlucky author an account for fifty pounds as the balance of costs. That he might not, however, depart without some useful lesson, one of the partners, a pleasant, gentlemanly, and highly-cultivated man, in the course of a friendly interview, when hard pressed by the unhappy author as to the causes of his failure, confidentially inquired whether he did not think it "just possible that his *forte* lay in some other direction!"

Of course the fact that this tragic-comic termination of his poor little venture was fatal to Gerald Arlington's literary dreams mattered not (at least at that time) to the "Weekly Snarler." The editor and his widowed mother went on their way prosperously. If a young man of great promise, and with very remarkable gifts for gladdening, elevating, and generally benefiting society, but without independent resources, had been prematurely snuffed out, what did it signify? No doubt there were plenty more such to follow, and

if not, why the world has much more need to laugh than to be "elevated"—to dine than to be "refined." Poetry was all very well ages ago when people were "slow" or extremely "verdant," and Art in any shape was useful still in promoting English manufactures and Technical Education, or as material for satire. But the only things of real worth now-a-days were science, steam, electricity, commerce, banking, bill-brokering, coals, cotton, manufactures generally, and ten per cent. as the crown and flower of it all.

But, query? If Gerald's production had been a work of real genius could the "Weekly Snarler" and all the lesser sharks have killed it? *A priori*, we should certainly answer, No; witness "Keats" for instance. And though such treatment and want of advertising, &c., might unquestionably extinguish a first-rate work *for a time*, its real merits would probably be discovered in after years, especially if the author could manage to publish something else equally good before he died. But further reflection suggests that it can never be really known till Doomsday what priceless productions have been entirely lost to mankind through unjust criticism and "a fortuitous concurrence" of adverse "atoms."

So when Gerald came home one day from a long ramble in Epping Forest, where he had been indulging in delicious and beautiful fancies, he found his publishers' letter and account, with a parcel containing cuttings from all the reviews, duly forwarded to him according to custom, by the said publishers.

Gerald bounded up to his room with eager hope and read the reviews all through, went up to town next day to the aforesaid publishers, had a private interview, came back to dinner with a jaunty air, ate very little, but braved it out for an hour or two, then retired for the night to wrestle with his misery alone.

Great Britain, certainly, at that time, was no more like Saxe Weimar or Jena than Gerald resembled Schiller or Goethe—perhaps rather less so on the whole.

Well, the young English genius, at all events, had English fortitude, and, in the course of the evening, collected all his manuscripts, and made a pile of the once trusted and beloved, now detested idols.

There was his completed drama in one neat volume, cloth gilt, 12-mo., with all the above-named criticisms passed thereon. Item—a sketch and first dozen chapters of a novel; item—his publisher's letters; item—two dozen scraps of poems, lyrical, epic, and—indescribable; item—innumerable sketches of other "tales" in prose and verse; lastly—a bran-new tragedy, subject,

"*Sicilian Vespers*," sketched out—one act and a half written. Scornfully, bitterly, he prepared to set fire to the heap, when a late, loud ring at the outer gate, and soon after a knock at his own door, informed him that his brother Richard had just returned from Canada. With genuine gladness he started up, pitched the book and manuscripts into a box, instead of lighting the sacrificial pile, and hurried down stairs.

The meeting of the brothers was very cordial. For a few days Gerald forgot his own private sorrows and plans in the interest he felt in his brother's adventures, especially in the zeal with which, though very cautiously, he tried to make Richard's return the occasion for a new start in life, morally speaking. But the character formed by years is not altered in a day; and Gerald and his brother were so totally different, moreover had so little in common, that they generally misunderstood one another. Hence, though Richard in some respects was improved by his late change of life, and healthier surroundings, but little good seemed to come of their conferences, except a slight inclination on the youth's part towards a more respectable mode of existence, and a deepened conviction that "Gerry was really an excellent fellow, only a great deal too absurdly good for this degenerate world." Mr. Arlington, however, talked very seriously with the returned scapegrace, and so thoroughly frightened even Richard's audacious spirit, that he really did turn over a new leaf. He worked hard at his profession, kept out of debt, gave up severe drinking and bad company, except by way of occasional relaxation, and generally behaved rather more like a gentleman than in former days. Whatever good was in him (and there were in him the seeds of much genuine good) now had a better chance than ever since he had left school. Even in his worst estate, there had always been a singular mixture of generosity with his selfishness, and, for a time, no doubt, he honestly tried to correct his worst failings.

CHAPTER XXIX.

IN most men's lives we find certain well-defined epochs, when they take leave of an earlier stage, and through their own deeds or the natural course of events, or through the action of others, have to pass on to wholly changed conditions. The changes from home

to school life, the parting from our boyhood, and later from our youth, are eras in existence, common and distinct enough. Harry Fortescue's entrance at St. — Hospital after his tumultuous and disappointed wooing, was the beginning of a new epoch in his still young and fervid existence. Gerald Arlington was now about to close one period and commence another of his fitful career; but to describe the circumstances, which is needful for understanding subsequent events, involves our allowing the current of inevitable events to take us once more to one of those festive gatherings, without which the parties in whom we are chiefly interested would then have been as totally severed as if they had been at opposite poles.

It has been said that Gerald Arlington took time to consider his father's proposals. While he was so considering, it happened that an invitation to a grand archery and cricket party was received, which Richard so vehemently begged might be accepted, that, though none of the rest felt much inclined for it, Gerald found himself one afternoon accompanying his father, mother, and brother, in a mechanical way, to the beautiful grounds of one of their county members. There to his surprise and dismay he met Leila Featherstone, looking very lovely, very cold, and very proud. She was surrounded by many young admirers of both sexes; and Gerald, waiting for his innings at cricket, overheard a stylish-looking man (called the "Honourable" something) declare to a companion reclining on the grass, as they watched the fair young archers, that he wished he had "never seen that Featherstone girl." Whereupon his friend remarked, with something between a sigh and a malediction:

"By George, you've hit my stumps there, too. What a couple of fools we are, Thurloe, to come among these girls who don't care a button for younger sons, while they make even our *blasé* hearts ache for a week afterwards."

With affected nonchalance and aristocratic drawl his friend replied:

"A girl like that oughtn't to go into society after she's engaged. It's hard enough, sometimes, to see them when they're married."

"Is it true, then," returned the second speaker, still loud enough for Gerald to hear, "that the Beautiful Panther *is* engaged?" (N.B.—A *soubriquet* by which Miss Featherstone was beginning to be known in certain circles.)

"Yes," replied his friend, "so I'm told. The new M.P. for K—— has been a great deal at the old dad's house; I've met him there twice, and everybody says the same. A splendid fellow he is too—will cut a great figure in the House. Head over ears in love

with her. I could see that. He's not here to-day, that's why she looks so cold and fierce."

"So abominably proud, you mean," said the other.

"Oh, ay, but she always looks that, I fancy. Think," he added, as the object of their adoration walked with a light, springy, yet stately step to the shooting post, "think what it would be, Jack, to see the pride and coldness all vanishing from that heavenly face and figure, before one's own wooing! Diana and Endymion!—by all the Olympian gods!"

"Oh, bother!" exclaimed his companion, with a sarcastic smile, "shut up. You do the thing well, no doubt, Thurloe, but the lady is too killing for a classical myth. Heaven help us, for miserable sinners! I wish she would marry and have done with it; one might flirt with her a little then."

"But tell me one thing," said Thurloe, as the other turned impatiently away, "do you really think the story of her engagement to the M.P. is true? Did she seem to return his flame?"

"Well, no—I must say I shouldn't be satisfied with the small change he got when I saw them together; but for all that, I believe it's true. The governor spoke of it as all but *un fait accompli* the other day at the Union Club to a certain friend of ours. Now let us go and solace the physical man. This is dry work, after all, and there's capital tipple here."

Gerald couldn't move whilst these men were talking. He felt spell-bound, and they showed no anxiety to conceal their sentiments, bearing themselves in a sort of careless, high-bred way with supreme indifference to listeners. He felt sure there was some truth in all he had heard. It was not the first time such rumours had reached him, but he had been too much accustomed to it to have paid any great attention to them hitherto. Now, however, the young men's talk made him miserable for at least half-an-hour; then he grappled with his folly and hurled it away, and sorrowed more for his friend than for himself. He took an opportunity of having a little conversation with the young lady in question, and tried to say a word or two about Harry, but with the conviction on his mind that she was all but engaged to the rising M.P.—no wonder his manner made hers equally constrained—so he went to the cricket stumps when his turn came thoroughly wretched, but thanking his stars devoutly that he had long given up all thoughts of interfering with Harry, and fully persuaded not only that he should not have had the slightest chance of gaining the lovely enchantress's affections himself had he basely tried, but that she had become utterly worldly, spoiled by flattery and frivolity. For

a few minutes he thought he was bound to write and let his friend know what had happened, and as far as their friendship was concerned it would have been a happy thing had he done so, but when he reflected on the "years" which that friend had declared must elapse ere he could offer any woman a home he dismissed the idea as only calculated to give Fortescue useless pain, and to do injustice to Miss Featherstone besides.

So the evening drew on. Gerald had been making a good score, as often happened, at the wickets; and while a few of the men were a little jealous, and others "cracked him up" immensely, many of the fairer sex (some in consequence, some in spite of his drama or the criticisms upon it) were quite ready to lionize him. But he gave nobody the opportunity; and in spite of his serene aspect, was pronounced to be nothing but "a melancholy Jacques" after all. Three or four young ladies, in fact, went home not a little disappointed, and much displeased, with Mr. Gerald Arlington's behaviour at that party. They had never seen him so *distrail*—not a smile or compliment for any of them. And, if truth must be told, the light of more than one gay and brilliant circle in London and its neighbourhood seemed to have gone out for a time, when young Arlington shone in those circles no more. When, however, the whole party were assembled on the lawn for syllabubs and songs, previous to final departure, and somebody had been tinkling a "light guitar," and one or two glees had been executed, and his mother and Richard had rallied him on his unsociableness, Jacques yielded to pressure, and gave the distinguished company two or three songs, the effect whereof seemed considerable. Many of the company, staid grave matrons even, to say nothing of enthusiastic young ladies and gentlemen, went away affirming that they should be "quite haunted" by those songs. For Arlington threw his once troubled but now victoriously passionate heart into them, and while singing had caught sight for a moment of Leila Featherstone's eyes gazing on him with a look he could never forget. Somehow, too, he had a presentiment that it was probably the last time he should ever sing in her presence, or, perhaps, indeed, in civilized society at all. It was, therefore, as the young ladies would doubtless have said if they had known the facts, "a swan-like dirge," that came from the disappointed swain that night, before finally dying to all the light and gladness, all the sympathy and civilization of cultivated society, dying to all intercourse with loving hearts and smiling friends, with fair women and educated, gentlemanly men, and with one dearer than all.

Yet, except for a brief space after hearing of Miss Featherstone's

probable engagement, no one could accuse him of looking glum. On the contrary, though he somewhat resembled a man walking in his sleep, except when at cricket, there was a quiet, glad serenity on the young poet's countenance worth noting, because it came from a great secret sorrow, *and* an intended as well as an accomplished sacrifice. All his literary and poetic dreams were no less utterly shattered than his dream of love. But, as not seldom happens with some men, triumph came to him out of defeat. Triumph over self and self-indulgence of every sort, however mistaken (according to most men's estimate) the course might be which he had resolved to adopt. Hence, though the first pang on hearing of the engagement was torture, and his first wild impulse was to draw Leila away from the crowd and ask her plainly if his friend might still hope on,—then if she answered no, to passionately pour out his own long-cherished love—he soon conquered that madness, and quietly turned to take up again and resolutely carry the cross he had chosen to lay on his own shoulders—unhappy on Harry's account, but not on his own. Nor at all on Miss Featherstone's.

Poor Leila. Hers were bitter tears when she got home that night. She felt very lonely and deserted. Light after light was being extinguished, while false beacons and a fatal tide seemed luring her on to a desolate shore. It was quite true that the gifted and aspiring young senator had paid her very marked attentions, and she knew that her parents greatly wished to encourage him. Hence she could not frown on him or torment him with her sharp tongue as she did other men occasionally, and so he continued to call, and talk, and show an increasing interest. But the poor girl knew well she had no heart to give him. Years hence it might be different, but not then, and years hence she would be changed and not worth the attentions of either senator, poet, or physician. Oh! why was there this mystery in Mr. Arlington? or why might she not pour out the full treasure of her love on his noble-hearted friend? The bewilderment and suspense were intolerable—yet they must be borne.

* * * * *

But there was one consciousness which she dared not face till it forced itself on her, and then she passionately strove to crush it out of sight. It was the thought that she might be so earnestly longing for leave to be engaged to Mr. Fortescue, partly, or even chiefly, that thereby the miserable questionings which had long harassed her respecting his friend might be banished for ever. And with that strange mingling of what was sometimes bewitching, and sometimes unlovely satirical scorn with pathetic tenderness, which formed an essential part of her character, Leila found

herself in the lonely night-watches, after that archery party, invoking the help of her avowed lover in fitful verse against one who had never confessed his passion, half mockingly singing to herself the concluding verse, and breaking down with an indignantly-repressed sigh at the end :—

“ Then would this foolish heart be still,
And find its earthly rest in thee—
Nor ever care again to know
If friend of thine—cared aught for me.”

At last she took her trouble where alone she could find relief, and while praying to be forgiven for her rebellious self-will, she found it was true that in the midst of their troubles “He gives His beloved sleep.”

As for Richard, he had not made a very successful *débüt*, though his remarkable personal resemblance to his brother gave him a good introduction in most quarters. He was, however, considerably impressed by Gerald’s popularity, felt injured thereby, and greatly disgusted ; but did not think he was jealous. While Richard was “tooling home the family drag” as he phrased it, according to his wont whenever he could get the chance, he came to the conclusion that fashionable society didn’t suit his book at all, and that though the Cyder Cellars and the Coal Hole were tabooed, the Argyll Rooms and other similar haunts were incomparably more agreeable.

What followed will be best understood by a glance at a letter from Gerald to his mother, who had been taken to Hastings shortly after this rural fête by Mr. Arlington. She was still in very delicate health, but was not considered worse. It was regarded merely as a precautionary measure.

[GERALD ARLINGTON TO HIS MOTHER.]

“ Hartland House, November, 1835.

“ Mother—I must tell you all—and you must not be vexed, but feel sure as I do that I am doing right at last. My father has been *very kind* ; but I cannot accept his proposals. If ever God called a human being to give up everything this world can offer, and work solely to help bring His people out of slavery, I heard that call years and years ago. I believe all my troubles have come on me through neglecting that call—and I *will* obey it now. I was wrong to give way, and go to that counting-house—more wrong

in my dreams of literary success, and artistic influence. The miserable fetters of popular ignorance and sin are not to be broken, and our suffering brothers set free from their intolerable wrongs, by poets, any more than by millionaires. If I can spend faithfully ten years in studying the conditions on which a nation's well-being really depends, the laws that regulate their moral as well as physical life, the true theory of government, and in mastering the science of oratory, as well as of composition, I may yet be able, through Parliament or the press, to help move the world—and *guide it*. But it was only when my father reminded me the other day that being now twenty-three years of age I had come into that little legacy of £200, which my grandmother left me, that I saw how I could carry out my purpose, viz., break off my present relations with society, and even with my friends, and work for a time utterly alone. Do not think this strange, dearest mother. All, in every age, who have been called to live for others, have had to renounce home, or friends, or worldly hopes. If men like Ignatius Loyola, and many a devout crusader in former days, could give up everything that was dear to them for so poor a cause as that to which they consecrated their lives, shall not we in this age be willing to suffer and deny ourselves for the grandest cause that ever needed workers and martyrs. Why even Alfred Featherstone gave up all for a time to devote himself merely to Art. I may die without having advanced the true interests of humanity a single step, but I shall at least have been true to conscience, and answered the pleading call to which I can never again be deaf.

"Therefore, dear mother, I must leave you and my father, and the dear old home for a time. Do not try to find where I am gone. I might not be able to resist your entreaties. I could not do so, remember, once before. Good-bye, dear, dear mother. Tell my father how it is almost intolerable to me to thwart his views and to leave you and the beautiful home that he has so long given me. But it cannot be right to go on living in a comfortable home, whilst the poor all around us are being crushed by temptations and wrongs. You know I once had another hope—a very, very beautiful dream. But that, too, you know is gone. Harry Fortescue, as I told you, loved her, and I would never try to rival him; but I believe neither he nor I have a chance. Henceforth I have only one dream, one passion. If I can work out my own ideal, you will hear of me, and after a time I trust often to see you again. I am writing to night to Richard, who, thank God, seems going on very well since he returned from Canada. He likes Harry Fortescue, and Harry is most kind to him. Give my kindest love

to my father and to dear Aunt Carry, and tell her all, Ever your very affectionate son,

“GERALD ARLINGTON.”

The young reformer had worked out his conclusions amid sore wrestlings of spirit, no doubt. It was indeed, as he truly said, misery to oppose his father, and leave his mother. But it was equally true his conscience left him no alternative. How many of us have and will have to suffer bitterly not for obeying conscience—that in itself must bring in some shape or other, no doubt, a great reward—but for not having sought and gained the light which would have enabled conscience to see more truly the Divine Will.

One thing, amidst all his troubles and faithfulness, Gerald Arlington did not do. It did not occur to him to ask for an answer to his perplexities where he would surely have received it, fully, clearly. He had never learnt to bring a question of this sort to One who alone was able to give the answer, who was, and ever had been, only waiting to be asked that He might give both that and everything else really needed. Yet if Gerald Arlington had been told that he was living a godless life, that he was (so far) unchristian, heathenish, he would have been very much astonished. He thought he was rather a religious sort of fellow than otherwise. So perhaps he was, as things go in these days. But, like some other people, he took it for granted he knew all that God desired of him, and should receive all that He desired to give him, without the need of any special asking. So he worked out his problem alone.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHEN Gerald's letter had been read at Hastings, Mr. Arlington calmed his weeping wife and answered her entreaties that he should instantly set off to London, find out the fugitive and bring him down to Hastings—by assuring her that “Gerald was doing the very best possible thing for himself under the circumstances,”—that he was showing an amount of steadfast resolution and willingness to bear privation on behalf of what he believed, or

thought he believed, or was trying to persuade himself he believed, to be his duty, which was a most hopeful sign. He was very glad, he said, that their son *had* so much determination and pluck. He would gain immensely by this experiment, but everything depended on his being left to work it out for himself. He must on no account be interfered with or helped; otherwise he would be ruined for life; and at no distant period either the whole affair must come over again, or he, Mr. Arlington, would have to support him in idleness as long as he could afford it—after which Gerald, who would have become a miserable, effeminate, dependent creature, would sink into some state of literary hack or under-clerk—perhaps die a gambler. As it was, they might hope for the best possible results. Their son would work hard—buy his experience—and then come home to them in less than a twelvemonth, which would not be a longer time than was spent by many a young man on his travels. “Afterwards he would buckle-to at business for the rest of his days, find a good little wife, and learn that the man who *would really benefit his fellow-creatures must gain their confidence by first doing well for himself.*”

Mrs. Arlington was comforted by these representations, though sorely grieving over the loss of her son's presence from the little family circle—the son whom she had loved the more tenderly because of his resemblance to the daughter in Heaven, and because that daughter was gone thither before him.

“If he had only left us some clue by which to send to him—if—if—you know, dear—he might fall ill—and be among utter strangers.”

“He loves us too well, my dear wife, to suffer very greatly—one bit more, in fact, than would be good for him—without letting us know.”

Yet Gerald's flight was a great shock to the strong, stern, loving heart—though nobody guessed it.

And still deeper was the grief to the frail, worn soul and body of his poor wife.

Alfred Featherstone did as he said he would—sold his picture, though finished in a slovenly way, for a good price; and, after a profligate round of dissipation at Cowes and elsewhere, came to live in lodgings near St. — Hospital, in the same November Term which witnessed the proceedings recorded in the last chapter. When he wanted money, he painted something that would sell—too often for unscrupulous dealers—and lived riotously on the proceeds till they were gone. He had given up the idea of Cambridge,

for, of course, he found all his old friends had left, or would soon be gone. All the lingering good influences of his sister's character, and of her affection for him, seemed to have utterly vanished. Much, even, as was hinted above, of his natural gentlemanly refinement of mind, and frank generosity, which had for a long time preserved him from some of the coarseness and grossest selfishness of vice, had departed also. But he had cunning enough to hide all this change from Harry Fortescue, for whom he had as warm a regard as he could now feel for anyone, and who, for his sister's sake, had shaken hands with him some time before. Harry's society he greatly coveted, not only from that lingering, real regard, but because the strong massive nature of the man gave poor Featherstone a feeling of satisfaction and security of which he often now stood greatly in need. For, if the truth must be told—a thing he didn't wish—his high spirits alternated with fits of terrible despondency and wretchedness. Of course he got what comfort he could on all suitable and unsuitable occasions from brandy-and-water, but he was holding as tight a rein upon himself in that respect as possible, in consequence of the warnings of a doctor at Cowes concerning possible *delirium tremens*. So he sought society of the cheerful cast, and never felt so comfortable as in Harry's apartments, except, of course, in music-saloons and casinos, when he could afford to go there. Fortescue felt a genuine interest in him, no doubt on Leila's account, although there was a perpetual and painful conflict as to whether he should utterly and for ever banish that fair enchantress' image from his mind, or trust to time, and, perhaps, Alfred's influence, for gradually re-establishing his intimacy with the young lady. Alfred, however, did not at first realize the hold he had upon Harry from that cause; in fact, he had by this time become unable to realize the thought of any genuine, pure love of man for woman at all; and, on the other hand, he was every now and then greatly bored by Harry's "prudery," as he called it. The objections his friend made to accompanying him in divers expeditions and revels was a constant annoyance, and the want of sympathy between them thereby felt was a still greater nuisance.

Yet Harry was gradually, though unconsciously, feeling the inevitable effect produced upon one's views of morality, when all your friends declare that to be right which you have been accustomed to think wrong, especially when you have no higher court of appeal to which you habitually resort. His sheet-anchor was his friendship for Gerald Arlington, and his still deep attachment to Leila Featherstone.

It will seem incredible perhaps to those who have never sounded the depths of moral debasement which her brother had now reached, but it is nevertheless true that as Alfred became aware of the strength of this obstacle, he set himself to cut the strands.

Unfortunately he had only too plausible a means of doing it, and he partly believed in the truth of what he urged, for he had heard that the M.P. didn't make much progress. He was also able to work on the generosity of Harry's character, and kill two birds with one stone, for he was considerably jealous of Fortescue's friendship for Gerald Arlington.

Hence one night, when he was trying to get Harry to a ballet-dancer's supper-party, and the latter had been faintly yet persistently giving answers to arguments which, with a curious infatuation for a man of so much determination he let Featherstone urge, Fortescue at length rather savagely exclaimed—

"Well, it's somewhat strange, after all, you should be driving that coach when you know what I think about your sister?"

Alfred's first impulse was to burst into a hearty and contemptuous cachinnation, but warned by former experience, he assumed a serious and decidedly impressive tone. Laying his hand affectionately on Harry's big arm, he said—

"Fortescue, for Heaven's sake don't fuss about her. I have long been wanting to warn you not to make a fool of yourself in that line. The fact is, she's spooney about young Arlington."

Harry started up as if stung by a viper, which he was.

"Aye, but she is," continued Featherstone; "and he is desperately sweet upon her."

"Proof—proof?" muttered Fortescue, between his teeth, and looking dangerously at his companion.

"Why, I had suspected it for some time, from lots of little things. But they met one day last summer at my lodgings, in Elm Street—I think, now, most likely by appointment—and weren't they just ogling and cooing all the time! They thought I didn't notice it, Harry"—and he gave an hilarious chuckle, which more than anything else threw Harry off his guard—"but I did; though I couldn't help thinking it was a bit of a shame to you, considering your highness's pretensions. Then they walked away together (she patting his horse) up to her nurse's lodgings, where I daresay they had another long chat together. But the best of the joke was, that a fellow who knows Gerry, calling on me the next day, told me—what d'ye think?" Here Alfred, oppressed with mirth at the recollection, laughed unrestrainedly, till he caught sight of Harry's countenance, and that quieted him at once. "He asked me who

that devilish pretty girl was Gerry Arlington had given his heart to, for he had happened to walk behind them for some little distance, and had then seen young Arlington actually kiss—not the young lady, by gad!—(though, perhaps, he did that afterwards)—but the horse's neck she had been patting." And he could not help another burst.

"Go on," said Fortescue, concealing his face; "anything more?"

"Yes, yes, one thing beside. She brought up a nosegay that day professedly, of course, for my mantel-piece—perhaps it was. But, at all events, I saw those flowers, Harry, which I had left on my mantel-piece, as plainly as I now see you, peeping out of the inside breast pocket of his coat, the sly dog, when he came boring after me down to Portsmouth, pretending he cared such a mighty deal about me. Now, I've no doubt, between ourselves, it was all to please Lily—the poor little jade—that he came down there. Don't you think so?"

"As a gentleman, will you swear to all this, Featherstone?" asked Harry, in a sort of quiet rage which would have rather upset the young man so addressed, when he was less of a blackguard than he had now become.

"No, I never swear. Ha! ha! But as a gentleman, and on my honour, it *is* true. Every word is true, and I strongly suspect they correspond occasionally now."

How easily truth and falsehood may be blended together by a false heart! Yes, and how easily falsehood may be made to look like truth.

"Well, then, go to the devil, Featherstone; I've nothing more to say. Excuse me, old fellow; forgive me. I am regularly upset, coach and all. I am really very much obliged to you. Forgive me, I'm turning sour. Good-night!"

Featherstone went to his supper-party, half afraid he had a little overshot the mark, and made Fortescue irrecoverably savage and hostile.

Poor Harry. Yes, he was wildly savage—not with Featherstone—chiefly, of course, with Gerald, and then with Leila, and finally with himself. He could not help believing Alfred, for it all came out so artlessly, accidentally as it were, and then it only confirmed his own dark suspicions. "Is this, then," thought he, "what comes of friendship? I could have believed it of a woman. They are so infernally fickle by nature, with all their sweetness and saintship—curse them! But Gerry, Gerry, I didn't think you'd trip me up, after all the years we have been true to each other—

true friends once, if ever men were. I thought there was something so genuinely noble and generous about him—I always thought he was a better fellow than myself; but I would rather have died like a rat in a hole than have treated *him* so. There's no good doubting it, for I have seen something myself. But, oh! how different from what I thought him. Surely he was once a grand fellow. And yet I remember how those Emmanuel men, at the very time they were extravagantly admiring him, after he had been 'wineing' there one day, declared that he had a dangerous cross of the Italian breed in him. And then to think how that poor little witch seemed to care for me at Ambleside, and at the Gardiners' hop, and then again in Kensington Gardens! Oh, heavens! I shall go crazy with all this beggarly to-do. It is cursed hard to have to lose one's faith in both friend and sweetheart at the same moment. But I, living like St. Antony, for her sweet sake, and always caring so for his good word! The smoothed-faced hypocrite! Nay, nay, Gerry, I'm wronging you still, my boy. You didn't mean to wrong me, I know you didn't. You struggled against your love for her as long as you could, and didn't mean to give way at last—wasn't it so, my poor Gerry? You didn't mean to trip up your old friend, only the temptation was too strong. No wonder, no wonder. Who the devil could help falling in love with her? And then I daresay he found out accidentally she did not care a pin for me, and did care for him. Shouldn't wonder, he is a more likely flame than this ugly, hulking fellow here. She tried many a time, I remember now, to talk to me on things I knew no more about than a Hampstead jackass, and cared less. He was up to all that stuff, and she knew the difference. Can't blame her; no, not a bit—nor him. No, Gerry, I'll be friends with you still—as well as I can—when I've got over this. God bless you both. But it makes life more and more of a farce. It was mean of him not to tell me about it, after all; I can't forgive him for that yet, this many a day. Four months ago, then, he was meeting her clandestinely, and putting her flowers in his bosom! Ugh! And still let me go on hoping. Why, by Heaven, it's since that I was at Hartland, and he never uttered a syllable about—even when I half quarrelled with him about it. Oh! Gerald Arlington, that was base—you didn't mean it—you thought you would leave it to time—you hadn't courage to speak—but it's base to be cowardly. Oh, ye gods, life is a farce, and my poor old dad was mistaken in more things than one. Heigh-ho! shuffle the cards—knives are trumps,—and to Old Nick with the honest men!"

"What's the matter there?" asked one hospital student, stopping another on a dull November morning, soon after the above conversation, as they met just outside the gates of the large building in — Street.

"Where?" The first speaker pointed to a door at which one of the hospital medical men was seen conversing earnestly with a neighbouring general practitioner as they entered the house.

"Oh, Harry Fortescue in a fever, I believe. He's been watching some cases about here for old Watson," answered the second man, carelessly, as he resumed his walk.

Yes, and a pretty smart attack it was. Poor Harry raved and threw the pillows about with very dismal energy. Alfred Featherstone had come the moment he heard of his friend's condition, and was as kind and attentive as a very selfish *roué* could be. He was perhaps the more diligent in his attentions for being slightly inconvenienced at times by what remained of his conscience, when Harry in delirium moaned drearily about Leila and Gerald, or frantically abused them both; and then piteously called upon them to tell him all they had to say about their love. The rosy-cheeked general practitioner who had the chief charge of him, and who was the gentleman in whose house Richard Arlington was boarding, of course heard something of all this and privately confided to Alfred his apprehension that Mr. Fortescue had been making a great fool of himself about some silly girl, and maintained that young men ought never to fall in love till they could marry. In this view Master Alfred heartily concurred; and then hinted that Fortescue made a fool of himself "in the anchorite style" also; which, of course, "was intensely absurd of him." "You see the consequences, doctor." The doctor shrugged his shoulders and then slightly smiled.

"Do you think he'll pull through, Mr. Watson?" continued Alfred.

"Well, I think he may—but it's touch-and-go, just now, you see."

"Then if he does, may I ask one favour—and that is, that you point out to him the folly of living in the ascetic way he's now doing, with all these infernally absurd scruples—he'll never get over this ridiculous infatuation which has brought him where he is, while he lives like St. Joseph!"

"Very likely not," answered the general practitioner meditatively, then adding, "and if he gets over this bout—another would settle his business."

"Then you must certainly make him understand, doctor, that he

must do as other men do if he wants to have his health. You take, eh?"

"I'll see, I'll see, Mr. Featherstone. You are quite right, *physiologically*—and pathologically, too, I may add. As to morality—opinions differ—but we mustn't be too precise. There are worse practices, no doubt, than those to which you refer. Poor fellow—we'll do our best for him now, at all events. Good morning, you make an excellent nurse, Mr. Featherstone, I'll recommend you, when you want a situation."

Fortescue's convalescence was tolerably rapid, but he was for a long time very weak and low-spirited. He didn't wonder that Gerald, with his guilty conscience, couldn't write to him, and of course he felt no inclination to write to Gerald. But how the sorrowful, wounded heart did long to be reconciled if possible to his old friend, and to have a letter from him, or rather a talk and a walk with him, such as they used to have in the days that would never return. Instead thereof, one dismal day, as the early London shadows were falling on his comfortless sitting-room, he had a long conversation with Mr. Watson, who, like most medical men, had a thoroughly benevolent mind, but was, perhaps, not over-burdened with religious principles. He prided himself on always looking at things in "a common-sense point of view." Like many of his brethren he made "an idol of health"—as Arlington once warned Harry he might be doing some day—ignoring the weighty fact, as medical men are naturally prone to do, that there is something more important even than health, after all; and that if we do our duty in this world, and take up our allotted cross now and again, we can't always keep our health. Hence, Mr. Watson having gradually extracted from Harry a general confession of his state and prospects, wherein it was manifest that he must look forward to living "bachelor life" for the next six or seven years, perhaps twice as long, he laid before him his views as to the proper course to be adopted by young men under the circumstances, with what he doubtless considered commendable common-sense sincerity. Happily for the honour of the profession, and for the prospects of the Divine will being done on earth as in heaven, far greater pathologists than Mr. Watson have declared, and do declare, that it is not necessary in such cases to break the moral law in order to keep the laws of health. Fortescue might have fallen into far better hands even among medical men than Mr. Watson. That gentleman, it is evident, believed heartily in the importance, nay, the paramount duty, of preventing and curing disease, and probably in little else beyond conventional morality and the possibility of a

"great first Cause" of things in general. He quite approved, however, of going to church, particularly as there was the chance of being called out of it, which looked well; he also extremely disliked anything that in his opinion was mean, dishonourable, selfish, or unjust. Of course he hated innovations and every species of quackery with perfect hatred. Homœopathy had scarcely begun then to be noticed in this country, or he would have doubtless found relief from many causes of irritation in abusing it, and all concerned with it. But he was superior to jealousy, except with regard to just *one* brother of his craft, who from the first had been rather in his way, but whom, nevertheless, he could have heartily liked and honoured (so he sincerely believed) had he not been such an intolerable dummy and general bungler. For the rest he never spared himself, but hastened about from one sufferer to another, wherever he was called, night or day, just as zealously to the patient who could only pay a little as to the man who could pay much. This gentleman, then, was Harry's chief adviser and comforter in those melancholy hours of slow convalescence that succeeded his illness; for though his sister had entreated him to let her nurse him, he obstinately and peremptorily refused, probably on account of her associations with Leila Featherstone. So he and Mr. Watson talked about medical matters day after day as long as the doctor, who felt a strong interest in the broken-down six-foot Cantab, could afford to stay. Besides, did not Mr. Watson delight in the enthusiasm which, kindling in Harry's eye as they talked over specially "beautiful cases," and on the science of healing generally, lifted the young fellow for a time from his despondency and gloom. Harry could have had plenty of the students' company; but after Cambridge men, it didn't suit him so well as before his illness, and he was now too miserable and weak to care for new acquaintances. Richard Arlington looked in now and then, but frankly admitted that he had enough of sick beds professionally without being bored with them as an amateur. Pierce and Hackett "shewed" occasionally, the former, who had a very warm regard for Fortescue, being prevented from coming often by having to work extra hard for his examinations.

One thing Harry saw and felt very clearly and forcibly in those days of darkness—viz., that he ought to forgive Gerald and help him to happiness. So at intervals he managed to scrawl the following letter:—

"Dear Gerald,—I have been gradually coming to the conclusion, on sufficient evidence, that you are head-over-ears in love with

Leila Featherstone, and had tried for some time unsuccessfully to conquer the weakness for my sake. I don't ask, and I don't want to know how far you have dealt quite openly and faithfully by me, though I wish you had spoken out when I was last at Hartland. But we are all of us desperately weak and mean on one point or another, and can't afford to cast stones at our friends. If you have in any way wronged me, believe me, dear Gerry, I do from my heart forgive you. We can still be friends, pretty nearly as warm as ever. I don't want to lose mistress and friend both; but I do want you to speak out frankly to me, and then to be happy with that noble-hearted girl, if you love her, as I believe you do, and must. Understand me, I don't suppose I have the slightest chance with her; but if I have, I could never come between you and her, Gerald. Only remember, I don't fancy I am making any wonderful sacrifice either of the lady or myself; for my uncle has settled my business for me in the marrying line, and it will be years, as I told you—ten or fifteen, perhaps—before I can think of connubial bliss. I don't know what you are up to now, for you have not vouchsafed me a line for three months; but whether you get along as a dramatist or fall back upon shop, you are sure, with your father's connections and help, of being able to marry in half that time, or perhaps much sooner. As for me, I must go on in my own way. Don't bore me about things on which, I fear, we agree less and less every year. I've lived long enough to see that a great deal we once thought admirable is mere humbug; but I believe as firmly as ever in real friendship; and though we may differ on many points, we may be true friends still (in spite of mutual infirmities), as in the old times. We cannot offer each other perfection, and we must not expect it. I have had a sharp attack of typhus, but am getting round again; and during the last few months I've seen many things much more clearly than ever before. Among others, that if we are to do any good in the world while we are in the body, we must to some extent accommodate ourselves to its laws, making the best of life, fighting against its evils, reducing all around you to subjection to the highest ideal you can form, losing sight of self, and just giving yourself away in the wisest style you can, for the good of society and your race. That's my creed, Gerry boy; and Cæsar's "*De Bello Gallico*" is my text book and inspiration—you would be shocked, perhaps, if I said it was my Bible. Fare you well, old fellow. I have not a notion where you are, so direct this to Hartland.

"Ever your old friend,

"HARRY ———

"Gerald Arlington, Esq."

When Fortescue had sealed and despatched this letter he felt as if the last cable was slipped that still bound him to the higher life of his youthful dreams; and the question of his subsequent course was finally settled as he dropped it into the letter-box. It was some weeks in reaching its destination, for Gerald had adopted a circuitous mode of getting any letters that might come to him at Hartland, and for more than a month gave no one the chance even of forwarding them to him, that he might carry out his purposes entirely undisturbed. Rather a dangerous way of proceeding when a man has dear friends and relatives.

CHAPTER XXXI.

IN due time Harry went down, not to Neville Court, he could not bear the idea of that, but to Ramsgate for a fortnight, leaving Alfred to the malignant and increasing influence of the "blues." One-half the world would drown itself, we are often told, if it knew what the other half was doing. Possibly; but from disgust rather than philanthropy.

While Harry was lounging listlessly one afternoon on the beach, and Leila Featherstone was planting-out some carnations in the conservatory at Wimbledon, both with very heavy hearts, Tommy Pierce was entering Featherstone's dingy, smoke-stinking sitting-room in — Street. That young man was in much the same state and attitude as Gerald Arlington had beheld him one memorable evening in Elm Street, and Pierce was considerably discomfited at the appearance he presented.

"You great goose!" he sung out. "What are you gaping at now?" Featherstone recovered himself, poured out heaps of thanks to "Tommy" for presenting himself, and finally confided to him the peculiar sensation and visions which grievously disturbed him whenever he was alone, and especially at night-time. He complained among other troubles of "fixed ideas."

"Ah!" said Pierce with due medical solemnity, "you must come out of that."

"Can't."

"I tell you you must or you'll come to grief. The long and the short of the matter, you rip, is this. You must give up all this

drinking and wenching, or by the powers you'll have the devil to pay and not a spoonful of 'bituminous' hot."

"Can't—can't, Tommy."

"Nonsense! Why don't you marry? You are spending more in the way you are going on than it would cost you to keep a wife."

"Marry? Ye gods!"

"Well; and why not? I've known lots of men forced to marry to get rid of all these infernal botherations."

"Aye, and then how has it answered?" Pierce shrugged his shoulders and replied—

"Least of two evils, I suppose. I mean to try as soon as I have got the blunt."

"It's a rum go," remarked Alfred, meditatively, thinking what pains he had been taking to frustrate Fortescue's tendencies in that direction.

"Rum? I believe you," responded Pierce vivaciously; "but better than marching into 'Queer Street.'"

"Humph! I move that the house do now adjourn and read the bill this day six months."

So they departed arm-in-arm to the Cigar Divan, and Alfred had a brief respite from the rack; and then about midnight he crawled upstairs to his lodgings again and stretched himself leisurely upon the said rack and writhed till morning.

Next day Featherstone greeted Fortescue on his return from the sea like a starved dog seizing a bone, and Harry began to feel touched by what seemed a genuine attachment, and which helped in some slight degree to fill the void and close the wound made by Gerald's silence and supposed faithlessness. So he gave himself up with less and less reluctance to Featherstone's company and pursuits. The poor wretch's reasoning—backed by recollections of Mr. Watson's medical advice—worked subtly on Harry's mind and conscience, as returning health and strength gave him back his old spirit of self-reliance and daring independence. He had been gradually coming to look upon all religion as delusion and humbug, and therefore to regard the clerical profession of course with contempt. These feelings made him look upon his father rather as the weak-minded victim of imposture, and upon himself as having too long been in a similar unfortunate and ridiculous case. He read with much satisfaction two or three works which Mr. Watson lent him with the idea of soothing his patient's mind, and removing fancies which sometimes still agitated him; and thus he began to see how absurd it was for men to believe in anything they could not see, or to trouble themselves about what

they could not possibly know or comprehend. He saw that the great thing was to do one's duty to our fellow-creatures and one's self—to observe all the laws of Nature, and make the best of the world as we find it. In this state of mind, of course, he drifted surely, if not rapidly, into precisely the course towards which Featherstone had been long anxiously leading him.

Hackett chuckled with a villainous satisfaction as he met him more than once in Featherstone's company in questionable localities. Neddy Grant turned round with a sarcastic smile to look after him—holding up his hands in pious horror—as he saw them entering well-known passages about the small hours. Pierce congratulated him in a quiet, matter-of-fact way on his great good sense. Bob Nicholson “grinned horribly” with a mixture of supreme amusement and contempt. Featherstone was in high glee, and declared privately to his friends that Fortescue was under the deepest obligations to him, “and he knows it.” But we need not further lift the veil that hides the unutterably loathsome abominations which are around our homes and daily paths at this very hour. We walk and play over the whited sepulchres, and our mothers, sisters, wives, daughters, know nothing of the foul uncleanness, the terrible sin, with all its ghastly retribution, which those sepulchres hide—*which exists the more securely, remember, because of those women's ignorance both in high places and low.*

Well, you may conjure up any images of desolate ruin you please—talk of Baalbec and Palmyra, Nineveh or Thebes—you may shiver as you look upon a battle-field, a hospital, a madhouse, or the torture-chambers of the Inquisition—but we take leave to think that, possibly, no scenes of desolation and anguish ever equal in sadness the ruin caused by such a fall as we are contemplating, and such scenes as we must refer to, but cannot further describe. Let them pass. The grave is now dug for one whom we have honoured and loved. The death-bell rings a merry peal. The Prince of Darkness, and all who rejoice with him, follow the corpse, chaunting the funeral services to very lively measures, and we will pass on with our eyes averted and our heads bowed.

There is one scene, however, we cannot pass if we would. It stood right in the path of a young girl, who never forgot it till her dying day—whereat few will wonder.

It so happened that Miss Fortescue had planned an expedition to a London theatre during the Easter Holidays, to witness the first performance of Miss Helen Faucit (then a most promising young actress) in Sheridan Knowles' “Hunchback,” while Leila Featherstone and a youthful cousin from Eton were staying with

her. Miss Fortescue had longed to ask her brother to meet them, and to try and bring Alfred, but Leila felt so strongly the desirableness of waiting to see his reply to certain overtures which will be presently mentioned, that she abandoned the idea. Moreover, Leila had a secret feeling that Mr. Fortescue would not be a sympathizing companion for "æsthetic delights." She had got rather reluctant permission from home to go to the theatre, but went with very mingled feelings of deep interest and shrinking aversion—the latter arising from early training. However, the result was that she had three hours of intense enjoyment. Her whole soul seemed lifted up and glorified by the new and thrilling life which Helen Faucit's splendid acting and the marvellous power of the play awoke in her. All that Gerald had ever whispered to her concerning the worth of Art, and especially of the Drama—all his passionate adoration of æsthetic beauty and culture—came swelling up in her memory and affections, and the tears which the heroine's sorrows forced to her eyes had some mysterious affinity with the recollections of those sweet talks in bygone days. The walk of life which she thought Arlington had deliberately chosen at the cost of great sacrifice rose immeasurably in dignity in her estimation under the spell of that night's unwonted happiness and admiration. Could it be possible that he was really going in future years to wield a sceptre of such power and beauty as that of the arch-magician who was now holding this vast assembly entranced by the spells of his genius? Surely a man was worthy to do so who had given up everything to serve the divinity he worshipped. The step he had taken, in no way seemed weak and self-indulgent, but heroic.

She had heard Miss Tylney read his last farewell letter to his mother, having been at Neville Court when Mrs. Arlington sent it to her sister, and had not fully understood his renunciation of æsthetic labours, but only his self-consecration to an unselfish and noble purpose, and was sure that in some way he would employ Art to work out that purpose. Hence she had felt then that there was an element of self-relying strength in Gerald's character which she had so revered in his friend, but had looked for to himself before in vain. Her first question had been, "What do his parents say about it?" And when she heard that Mr. Arlington spoke of the affair to her father in a cheerful, hopeful sort of way, she allowed herself to admire him without reserve. "Nothing," she thought, "but a very genuine nobility of nature and character could have sent him from a home of luxury and from a sphere of worldly success such as his father offered him in business, to live in

a cottage and work solely to gain the power of elevating his race."

The eloquent young M.P. had been finally shown the hopelessness of his suit some weeks before, but only through her passionate tears and entreaties. She had resisted, not without inward struggle and sore pain, her stern yet loving mother's remonstrances and warnings, and her father's impatient, ill-repressed wrath. And since then she had been turning, in spite of all her efforts, more than once in tender memories to those two dear friends who, because they were such friends, she scarcely ever separated when thinking of either of them. She had heard her father inveighing bitterly, in a spirit of extreme worldliness, against "that fool, young Arlington," for giving up such capital prospects, and the more she heard him abused the deeper grew her romantic and imaginative interest in the young homeless wanderer, and then she thought, with far more of tender and respectful regret than pride, of how he had shunned her for many a past day, and how he had nevertheless once kissed the flowers which her hand had carried. Yet, perhaps, after all, he had only kissed them for their own intrinsic loveliness. But as to shunning her, that might have been because he knew of his friend's attachment to her, or, perhaps, because he felt consecrated to a noble life, which, at all events for years, would prevent his having a home to offer her.

The very plot, as well as the exquisite acting of the beautiful play going on before her, helped with its subtle fascination to humble her native pride and call up all that was most womanly and loving in her heart. It might have been love for that wandering poet which sent a flush to her cheek but for another recollection which would intrude.

A girl can never hear for the first time from the lips of a man whom she respects, words of genuine love—words that offer that which above all other earthly things (if it can be called earthly) is dearest to a true woman's heart—wedded love—without retaining a grateful and affectionate recollection of him who offered it—a remembrance which years of unkindness, even of cruelty, perhaps of deep degradation, are often unable to efface.

Gerald Arlington had never spoken to her of love—never asked for hers.

Leila Featherstone was not a girl likely to forget that moment when Harry Fortescue startled her by passionate pleadings that told how deeply he cared for her, and though she knew there would always be an aching void in her intellectual life if she married him, yet, like many other women, she also knew that so long as she

thoroughly respected him she could be his glad and thankful wife, to love and serve him, and in such loving service could stifle all those poetic cravings that sought for very different companionship. But if he could only once again save her brother, and from a far more fearful fate than that of drowning (as she had been secretly hoping ever since she had heard of his coming to live in London, and of the renewed intimacy between him and Alfred), then she felt that the devotion of her whole life to him would be given with measureless gratitude and love for ever—that in spite of all present obstacles God would surely give him the reward which he once at least seemed to prize so dearly, and she could wait God's time.

Now most of these very natural but curious and complicated thoughts and fancies had been very properly confided, under great stress of sorrow, to Mrs. Featherstone by her daughter, when that lady's true motherly tenderness and compassion had for once broken through her usual reserve, at the time that her weeping daughter had refused the young M.P. Deeply as both parents felt mortified by that refusal, they had suffered too much from Mr. Featherstone's thwarting one child to attempt coercing another, even if they had not known enough of Leila's character to be aware they might as well attempt coercing the beech trees on their lawn. Besides, her health was giving way, and another consideration weighed heavily with both parents. It had struck them that if Harry were now encouraged it might be the means of bringing poor Alfred home again, for at present he was dead to them, refusing all their advances. So Mrs. Featherstone was authorized to send Mr. Fortescue an invitation, in the most diplomatic manner her experienced head could devise, and Mr. Featherstone held a consultation with his head clerk with the view of ascertaining how much more a year he could afford to settle on Leila, in case of her marriage with the disinherited doctor, than would have been necessary had she married the wealthy M.P. He found he could very well afford an ample "subvention," till Fortescue got a good practice at all events. In short, the prospect for poor Harry was brightening fast behind the cloud.

Had he but known it. . . .

There are a few more of us hard at work in our own little, miserable way, unfitting ourselves for the happiness and success that are being prepared for us "behind the cloud." . . .

For it so happened that this same evening (accidentally, as mortals say) Harry and Alfred, quite unconscious of the presence there of the ladies from Neville Court, had turned into the same theatre at "half-price" time, but did not trouble themselves to go

in to witness the conclusion of "The Hunchback," else they would, in all probability, have also seen their friends. They had other amusement, and waited for the farce.

The play at length was over. The dark curtain had fallen on that magic scene of enchantment, amid thunders of applause. And Leila had fallen with it from heights of romantic bliss. The young Etonian had seen the farce before; and they had all gone on the understanding that the ladies did not wish to remain for the after-piece.

But when they left their box, their youthful escort, possibly like many young Etonians (albeit clever, gentlemanly, and belonging to the "upper fifth"), was presumptuous—vehemently desired to figure in the eyes of his lovely but pensive cousin as a knowing "man about town," up to anything.

So in passing through the corridors, with Miss Featherstone on his arm, not quite sure of his way, but disdaining, of course, to inquire, bewildered by the crowds and also by the dazzling brilliancy of the ladies and their costumes, he lost sight of Miss Fortescue, missed the right turn, followed two or three very handsome dresses, and at length blundered into the precincts which, except under the purifying *régime* of noble-minded managers (to wit, Messrs. Macready and C. Kean), had long been the disgrace of London theatres.

Just as Leila, getting frightened, was saying she was sure they were wrong, the cousin, with a quick throb of shame and annoyance, perceived his mistake and hurriedly wheeled round. But not before Harry Fortescue, flushed with wine, had strode past them, laughing loudly, with his arm round the waist of a very handsome, bold-looking, dark-haired girl, who leered at the Etonian as their eyes met. Just at the same time Harry was calling to Alfred Featherstone, "Come along, my Adonis! here's your Venus!" while that young gentleman, from some cause or other, appeared reluctant to follow.

Leila had one glance into the saloon at the moment that Fortescue was thus entering it, and she understood something of what that miserable moment revealed. The shock made her almost faint, but her cousin hurried her on, and in a few minutes she stood trembling and deadly pale beside her friends in the crush-room. A chair and a glass of water were quickly procured.

The young fellow was profuse in his apologies, tried to pass it off by making light of the scene, not knowing how much of it Leila had witnessed, and then, trusting to her ignorance, muttered, nervously—with an attempt at a laugh (in bad taste, though well meant)

—something about “those young folks coming it *rather* too strong.” He little knew how much cause his poor cousin had to tremble with blanched lips—how the deep yearning love for her brother, the still clinging hopes for his restoration to virtue—to her parents and herself—the fond girlish sort of hero-worship with which she had once looked up to Mr. Fortescue, were all laid low in the dust in that moment, and for ever. In the dust? Say, rather, in the unspeakable filth and abominations of a young Englishman’s ordinary matter-of-course refuge from the hindrances that, like a wall of flame kindled at the nether fire, wave him and thousands more back from the hallowed gates of married life.

It was almost impossible to avoid telling Ellen, when they got home, why she had been so painfully affected. In the midnight silence of her little room at Portland Place, where preparations had been made for them in the absence of the family, she sobbed out her sorrow and anguish on that faithful bosom; and Ellen, whose grief was scarcely less than her friend’s, had the greatest difficulty in restraining the hysterical bursts of grief which shook poor Leila’s slender frame.

“Oh, Ellen, Ellen,” she exclaimed, “I had so honoured and cared about your brother—ever since I knew him—as Alfred’s preserver and as your brother; and now to see him drawing Alfred on into more dreadful —. And you know he did once seem to care so much for me, and I felt so grateful to him; and I had thought more than ever that perhaps some day—for you know mother had written to ask him to Wimbledon —. But oh, Nelly dearest, never, never can we now be to each other what—I never could—you remember our talk that day, dearest, with Miss Tylney? I solemnly vowed to God, then, that I would *never* marry—rather than marry a man who had lived in habitual sin. And oh, Ellen, it was no mere momentary fall that could have made your brother—could have done what I saw to-night. Oh, Ellen, how sad it is for you—you who love him so much. And I did think that he was trying to save Alfred. Oh, Alfred, Alfred—my brother—my brother! Why have you not come back to us? This is misery, indeed—Ellen, dearest—I cannot bear it.”

There was, could be, no help to either for such sorrow but in their deep mutual sympathy, and in prayer to Him who had first taught them to “love one another,” and given “His Son to seek and to save.” So they read a chapter or two from the Bible, and at length, Ellen left her poor friend lulled to sleep and temporary forgetfulness of all that had passed that wretched night.

With the morrow, however, all poor Leila’s misery returned, and

in addition came torturing thoughts that Harry's fall might be the consequence of her father's refusing to let him follow up his attachment to herself. "If I had but shown him when we met at that wedding the real interest I felt in him. Ought I indeed to give up now all thoughts of him for ever? May not God have meant me to help to save him from ruin? Is it wholly, absolutely, for ever, too late? Yet I never, never can love him now as a woman should love her husband." The intellectual gulf between them, as we have said, she felt could have been bridged over. But she knew that the bridge could never be found that would cross that far deeper, more terrible abyss which had opened between them that night. Then came the thought that "If Mr. Fortescue had but kept his hold upon his father's Christian faith, he never would have fallen like this." In *that* first loss she was sure lay the true secret of the subsequent fall. Perhaps she was not far wrong. "And yet," thought she, "he was once so noble—so good—might he not become so once again?" And visions of bringing him back to his trust in God, to the higher life "hid" for him there, filled her heart.

Thus alternating between compassion for the man and loathing for his conduct—now drawn towards him by that profound pity and interest so near akin to love, and urged by a scrupulous, most painfully conscientious, yet vague sense of duty towards him—then repelled by feelings of the deepest aversion—poor Leila was tossed at intervals in restless doubts for many a weary day. During all that sad time Ellen's love and watchful care were, under Providence, the means of saving her from what would probably otherwise have been a fatal illness. "Never before," as she pathetically whispered to Miss Fortescue, "have I felt so deeply His loving-kindness, who has promised that 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.'"

Her love and trust in God, in fact, which had been little more than a name under the stern influences of her early religious instructors, had been growing powerfully and deepening of late years, under the combined teaching and character of Ellen Fortescue and Miss Tylney and her American prophet, till she had found in all those dreary seasons of the last two years when, as she expressed it, she often "walked in darkness, and had no light," that her Heavenly Father was only "waiting to be gracious." True enough, no doubt. Waiting for the opportunity when she would turn to Him and truthfully give herself up to Him wholly, unre-

servedly, that He might reveal Himself and His infinite love so fully that her only feeling would be gratitude for the darkness and sorrow which had made her understand so much of what an apostle has called His "marvellous light," and "of the love which passeth knowledge."

CHAPTER XXXII.

IN a large, light, airy room on the ground-floor of a roomy cottage, surrounded by a garden, on the outskirts of a country town in the midland counties, sat a young man lost in contemplation. If we were told that the subject of his thoughts was a vision of a vast and applauding crowd listening in tranced silence on a high festival day to the said young man's impassioned appeals for social and political reform, that he beheld, moreover, in vision, that crowd, with sympathetic admiration, catching the generous flame that should burn up at once both their iniquities and their wrongs, it would be sufficiently evident who the visionary must be. Arlington's time was divided pretty fairly between working and dreaming. The latter was kept under, on the whole, with tolerable success, but served for refreshment in the place of companionship and friends. The young reformer was often intensely happy in those days, and worked away with joy at Quintilian, Demosthenes, Cicero, Adam Smith, a tale for a popular serial, and an article for the Penny Cyclopædia (the last two to eke out his slender resources). Full of health and hope, steeped in a generous self-sacrificing enthusiasm which however misguided must always bring some kind of a blessing with it, he threw himself with a chivalrous ardour upon the course he had marked out as the means of lifting his countrymen from the degradation and wretchedness in which he saw large masses were weltering. No wonder that he was happy—for a season—that he did not miss, or did not suffer an hour's uneasiness from missing, all the luxuries to which he had been accustomed, not even the society of friends so dear to him. He had brought with him from Hartland, as the one dear friend who could neither disclose his retreat nor interrupt his studies, his favourite dog, a beautiful spaniel; and as long as he could work with all his might in-doors at those things which would, as he thought, enable him to emanci-

pate his fellow countrymen from their bonds, and raise them to the pure bright life of art, love, and beauty, he could do without society—wanted no other happiness for a time than the exulting bounding walk, with his joyous sympathetic little friend, on the neighbouring hills, or the glad rushing forth to occasional boating in a cranky little skiff on the river that flowed past the town.

But that letter of Harry Fortescue's, which we saw written in a former chapter, when it at length appeared, was a much more disturbing element. For some days he locked it away—would not grapple with the agitating thoughts it gave rise to. Then he got to an important and very exciting period in his popular tale. Ten days went by. At last he wrote in a *furor*;—wrote thus :

[GERALD ARLINGTON TO HARRY FORTESCUE.]

"Dear Harry,—I needn't say that your letter at first put me in a rage. But gradually I remembered how many things there were to mislead you ; and I felt strongly the rare generosity of my Harry's nature in forgiving me what must indeed have seemed to him a huge baseness and wrong. The best proof *I* can give that *I feel* this, is to forgive you, as I do very sincerely, the wrong you have done me in believing that I had played so mean and treacherous a part. It's all very well for you to say, 'let's be friends as before,' but you know *we could not be* if I had really done such a thing as you fancy. There can be no true friendship any more than true love without esteem ; and while you write capitally as to our common infirmities and sins, it seems to me there are some sins which *won't* let us have the same respect and regard for him who commits them. Isn't treachery one of these ? Harry, I never could have met you again if I had done what you thought ; and it makes me miserable to think what may be the effect on your mind of believing it. I am very sorry your letter has been so long in reaching me. You seem to me to write in a horridly vile and absurd tone about yourself and what must become of you. You are *not* to give up Leila Featherstone. You are to be her beloved and impassioned spouse, some day or other making her and yourself as happy as you both deserve to be. Dear old Harry boy, the time has come when I must tell you, what I confess I see now I ought to have told you some time ago, but I could not bear seeming to parade my feelings. However, the long and the short of it is—as you suspected—I have loved Leila Featherstone very deeply,—before you did, but I had no reason to think she cared much about me. I had no chance of marrying her for a long time : and when you told me how despe-

rately you were in love with her, of course I determined to give up all idea of trying to cut you out. I was going to add, you little know how much this cost me; and yet if you think how *you* have loved her, how worthy she is of your love, or of the finest fellow's that ever walked, you can realize the struggle it has more than once been to keep true to my resolution. I just mention this that I may obtain your thanks, sympathy, and general esteem. But I have never, Harry, been unfaithful to you. I have never said a word to draw her my way. She hasn't an idea that I have ever been infatuated with her charms; and I have turned back more than once when I thought the tide might drift me into dangerous companionship with her. I am not vain enough to suppose she ever thought much about me; certainly not if she felt she might think of you. But of this I am certain, that now she does not care two straws for me, and that I, at least, have not diverted her regards from you. So I'm not going to be out-done in generosity, old boy. Take back that nonsense about giving her up. For God's sake don't be dropping into the mud because you fancy you've no chance with her. But you must look sharp, or she'll be snapped up by somebody else. Go and talk to her mother. The time has come when I think I ought in fact to tell you that I know, through my aunt, she once asked your sister not to talk to her about you, because she felt she cared *too* much about you, while her parents didn't approve of any engagement. I do honestly believe she did once, and therefore in all probability does still, love you. You may imagine that at one time I watched her pretty closely when you and she were together.

"Do not talk, Harry, in that sneaking fashion about giving up all that we have so honoured and lived for, all that your father so deeply cared for, and the legacy of nobleness he bequeathed to you. *I will* bore you with these thoughts now lest the Furies bore you with them when it may be too late to try and get rid of them. Oh! Harry,—I was able to bear all the misery of feeling that Miss Featherstone never could be my wife, and have even long thought of it cheerfully, by believing you would make her happy, and would find in her love your own highest life and joy. But if you were to cut yourself off from ever being worthy of her, from being able to come and ask her (with the purity and nobleness she deserves to find in a husband) to be your wife, and yet were to win her heart, that would be just simply damnable—nothing more or less.

"But you will not. You *are* worthy of her, and will make her as happy as she deserves. The past has long since been expiated.

She does need and does deserve a noble, pure heart like yours to rest on. Think of all the cold-blooded politicians, or the empty-hearted licentious fops, who flutter about her. Is she to be left, *driven* perhaps, to marry one of them? Isn't the thought enough to send one mad? Hold on awhile, Harry, we shall yet conquer and rejoice together. I'll be your groomsman, old boy, won't I—that's all! You may get into practice much sooner than you think, for Heaven will help you if you are true to yourself and to her. Your uncle will fall ill, and you'll cure him, and then he'll relent! or some other rich patients will give you thundering fees. Hold on, Harry, yet awhile, and never say die! God bless you. Bye-bye.

"Your old friend,

"G. A.

"P.S.—I'll write and tell you all about myself shortly. Direct to George Arkwright, Woodbine Cottage, Upper Kingsgate, Deansford.

"Did I tell you I came here under a feigned name for greater seclusion. I am working harder than ever I did in my life, except once, during the month before college examinations in Gower Street, and I *think* I make some progress. Before your abominable humbug came, I could say I was perfectly jolly in general, if I could only feel sure my father and mother were reconciled to my plans. However, I look forward to paying them a visit by-and-bye, and perhaps living with them again in a year or two, when I have finished a few articles I am writing for a cyclopædia, and a tale I have begun for a magazine, and for which I am promised a few pounds. For then I shall have proved my right to independent action. Let me hear from you soon. Oh, if we were only going to dine together to-morrow at 'Dolly's' chop-house, or at dear old Hartland! The garden and grounds there will soon be looking lovely. But we *will* be jolly there, or somewhere else, Hal, in less than a year's time, eh?"

Talk of "Saxon after-wit!"

Why, in the name of Heaven, Gerald Arlington, didn't you send that letter sooner!

Harry Fortescue was entirely ignorant of who was brushing past him that unhappy night in the corridor of ——— Theatre. Not so Alfred Featherstone. He had been more than usually depressed that evening, and, while plunging into the mad whirl of dissipation, hoping to find a momentary relief, he had not dared to drink freely and was perfectly sober throughout. He had recognized his sister's

face in an instant, and hence his hanging back lest she should see him, giving her the impression, of course, that Mr. Fortescue was drawing her reluctant brother into the scenes of vice from which she had just turned sickening away.

Featherstone said nothing that night about what he had seen to Fortescue, naturally fearing the effect on his companion; but of course he couldn't help promising himself some fun about the matter the next day.

On the following morning, Harry Fortescue was sitting moodily over his untasted breakfast with that ineffable sense of mingled languor and loathing which those only can understand who have lived as he had been doing for some weeks past. And the partners of his guilt—were they supremely gay? Probably they would have averred they were a hundred times more miserable in body and in soul even than the men whom they allured. No doubt they *were* as much more so as woman's nature is at once more delicate and more pure than man's. "*Corruptio optimi pessima est.*"

All that was best and purest in Harry's nature was beginning to reassert its power, especially in that season of wretchedness and remorse. Such a man could not, as we have seen before, for very long revel in the sty without experiencing at times an intense revulsion of feeling, and it was in one of these seasons that Arlington's letter was handed to him that morning. As he read the first portion of it a miserable consciousness came over him that he was occupying the position which *he* had assigned to Gerald in relation to their friendship; and a cold shudder went through his heart as he felt that Gerald never would again give him the same esteem and ardent friendship which had up to this year stood in their mutual worship of manly nobleness and purity of heart. He had felt, almost ever since sending his last letter to Gerald, that what he said in it was untrue about their friendship not suffering from Gerald's supposed treachery.

He had, in fact, not long written that letter before he knew it was penned in the weakness of convalescence, when he was yearning for affection and stretching out the wounded tendrils of his soul, seeking for the old friendship to cling to in his bodily and mental depression. As he recovered strength, he knew also that he could not care one half as much for Arlington, if he had really behaved as he believed. And the more his admiration of his friend's self-sacrifice now increased, and the more he felt drawn towards him by an irrepressible yet most painful consciousness of affection and esteem—at once of having wronged him and of vehement longing to repair the injustice—the greater was the

sense of shame and misery which told him that he and Gerald could never be the friends they once had been.

Then as he read on, a wild, passionate hope naturally sprung up that he might yet win Leila's hand; and from the abyss of a great despair might once more rise to the regions of recovered purity, friendship, and love. If she had indeed ever cared for him, as Gerald's letter, combined with former evidence, made him now believe she did, if Gerald himself had learned and could truly interpret the first great rudiments of Christianity—if God were the author of that message of forgiveness to man—surely he might still hope.

And then the mighty force of resistance and fighting power that lay in the man's heart rose up and battled fiercely with the fiends of unhallowed passion, and shame, and despair—with sophistical arguments of medical advisers on behalf of uncleanness, with fear of contempt and sneers, with reckless indifference, and defiant atheism—all contending in turns for mastery over his soul.

At length, he wrote a brief reply to Arlington, thanking him from the depths of his heart for all he had done and said—pouring out his penitence and affection, but touching very slightly on the extent of his lapse into vice—rising up into the new life of hope and recovered purity of heart—as well as blessed trust which Gerald's letter had breathed into him, and concluding thus:—

“Oh, God! if I may only be helped to climb again from the depths of this horrible pit! I accept your noble sacrifice, Gerald, because I do in my heart believe she cared for me once, and because I feel that my only chance of conquering the devil is to look up to an angel like her. But the intolerable wretchedness of such pranks as I've been playing is that all the power of loving ‘with a pure heart fervently,’ as the old apostle says somewhere, seems taken away from one by this vile whoremongering. If I can but love her as once I did, if—oh! if I can but ever bring her to love so mean a reptile as I am become—and yet I am *not* that—I am still a man, ‘made in the image of God;’ and I may still return. *He* must care for me still, for I know my poor father on earth would have cared for me to the last, even if that last were a felon's death on the gallows. God cannot care for us less, Gerry, though He seems for a time to have deserted me. But that is only because I deserted Him. He can't have really forsaken me. Gerald, years ago I heard a fine sermon, somewhere, on Judas Iscariot, in which the parson declared that his deepest sin lay in despairing of Christ's forgiveness. I thought the notion was

rather bosh, then. I'll stand by it now. It is not—cannot be too late—if *only life is spared*. May God in heaven bless you, Gerry, though I daren't write myself down,

“Your old friend,

“H. F.”

The letter, duly directed to “George Arkwright, Esqre.,” was at once posted, with very mingled emotions, in which, however, a sense of relief was paramount. Harry resolved to cut the dissecting-room for that day, and take a solitary pull up to Richmond. The wisest thing he could do. It helped him greatly to meet what followed. An eminent physician has said that he believes no man would blow out his brains if he took a dose of medicine first. A row of a dozen or twenty miles would in many cases be still more efficacious. But, after all, what amount of either medicine or exercise can permanently make straight that soul which has become crooked? We need some other “setting right” and “keeping right,” besides even those remedies. When Paul said, “Bodily exercise profiteth little,” he doubtless referred to superstitious notions, too prevalent in all ages, where corporeal action of some sort is substituted for spiritual exercise and effort. He certainly did *not* mean that healthful bodily exercise, whether in labour or sports, was not a great help generally, indeed indispensable, in subduing the lower nature. But if he meant that all such exercise is of no avail—may, on the contrary, only strengthen that nature, unless spiritual influences and intense effort of will help the higher nature to conquer—why then, poor Harry found his words to be terribly true.

Well, the young man was returning home about dusk, considerably the better both for *his* “bodily exercise” and for the reflections and resolutions to which his morning meditations had given rise, when, on entering his room, he saw, first, two letters lying on the table, and next perceived some man reclining listlessly on the sofa “blowing a cloud.” When Fortescue discovered who it was, he started back with feelings of intense aversion. Of all men he most shrunk, at that moment from meeting Alfred Featherstone. But he couldn't retreat. His natural combativeness and courtesy both spurred him on, and he got out a greeting. “Good day, old fellow. Seem rather seedy. Should have had a row, as I have.”

“Confound your rowing! Here have I been hunting for you all day—through all the hospitals and dining-rooms and cigar divans in London, all to no purpose. Even put my head into that beastly dissecting-room.” Seeing that Harry looked unresponsive and

rather queer, Alfred suddenly changed his surly, injured tone, and exclaimed vivaciously—

“Well, doctor, who in the name of all the pigs do you think we met last night?”

“Wait a bit,” said Fortescue, taking up the letters. “Just let me look at these.” The first was a very gracious though guarded communication from Mrs. Featherstone, inviting Mr. Fortescue to dinner at Wimbledon, and closing with a friendly message from Mr. Featherstone, which Harry saw with half a glance, was meant to make amends for his cavalier treatment when they last parted in Kensington Gardens. It made the blood bound in his veins with a wild thrill of happiness which he hadn’t known since that parting.

But the other note was from his sister. She and Leila had heard that Mrs. Featherstone was writing to Harry with a hint of her motherly purpose, and this brought the conflict in Leila’s heart to a final close. The unhappy girl ended a brief conversation with Ellen, after a sleepless night of agonising doubts, by taking Miss Fortescue’s hand, and dropping unconsciously on one knee before her. Then she looked up in her friend’s face with wild tearful eyes, and said, quite calmly, but in a hollow unnatural voice, “Ellen, I will never be your brother’s wife. Please tell him so,—and why.”

And Ellen, thereupon, very sadly, but very faithfully, wrote to her brother, referring first to Mrs. Featherstone’s invitation, and then to the company in which Leila and she had seen Alfred and himself the night before. She added: “I cannot think you have, lately, at all events, been wishing to marry Leila Featherstone, or that you knew of her mother’s letter of invitation to you being written. It would be too horrible to think this. But however that may be, Leila means that what I am now writing at her request should put a final and absolute end to any relations that have existed between you, and to any idea of her ever being your wife. And I think she is right—supposing always that she was not mistaken in saying it was you whom she saw. Would that this were possible! But I fear she has cared for you too much, Harry, in past times, not to know you too well to have been mistaken.” Ellen concluded with a few words, praying her brother to retrace his steps, and to save Leila’s brother, at all events, if it were possible—adding that Leila had asked her so piteously to say this, and to tell him that to the latest hour of her life she should pray that they might yet meet in a higher world. As regarded this life her resolution was “final and unalterable.”

Fortescue dropped the letter. * * * *

Featherstone, seeing he had finished reading it, impatiently repeated his question two or three times—"I say, Fortescue, whom do you think we met last night? Now you *must* guess, my dear fellow. It was such a jolly lark! Ha, ha, ha! Only fancy that little vixen of a sister of mine losing her way in the corridor of ——— Theatre, under the guardianship of some raw schoolboy, and blundering into the saloon of all places in the world, and coming out just as we were going in! Ha, ha, ha! You know, I saw them, and perhaps could have stopped you, but it was too good a joke to lose, don't you see!" and then he laughed hysterically. "And there were you with your arm round Polly Fielding, shouting to me to come on, and I playing the good boy—hanging back, don't you see, as if ashamed—you leading me on to the ways of naughtiness, and I like the injured innocent! ha, ha, ha!"

It was quite true; he might have kept Harry back and have avoided the encounter; but not only was the joke, as he regarded it, irresistible, but here was an opportunity, he thought, of finally delivering Harry from his sister's witching spells. Featherstone's laughing prevented him at first from seeing the effect of his communication upon his companion. When he did, the laughing stopped abruptly. Fortescue had slowly risen from the arm-chair into which he had flung himself after reading his letters, and was glaring fixedly on the laugher with folded arms and set teeth.

The whole scene of the previous night came flashing back on him, and his sister's letter, which at first confused him, was now explained. He distinctly remembered having had a momentary *side* glimpse of some girl in full dress with dark hair, leaning on a youth's arm, who seemed to have lost her way and to be desperately flurried, but the idea of its being Leila Featherstone never occurred to him till that moment. The effect was alarming enough, coming as it did, not only after Mrs. Featherstone's and his sister's letters, but close upon Gerald's letter and his own reply. In all strong natures the barbarian element lies very near the civilized surface—especially so in Harry Fortescue's, as we have more than once had to admit. It was the old scene at Cambridge all over again; but in proportion as the misery and wrong were greater now, was the danger of a fatal issue to their interview. The recollection of that scene at Cambridge, of what led to it, and of the futility of his then breaking away from the unprincipled sneak who had been his ruin, came sweeping over Harry Fortescue in that terrible moment, and when added to Featherstone's recent conduct half maddened him now.

Uttering a tremendous oath, with one stride he seized his victim,

as Featherstone, with chattering teeth and knees knocking together, retreated a few paces yelling for help. The landlady heard his cry down in the kitchen, and came hurrying up-stairs, but not till Fortescue had got his gripe on Featherstone's throat in a way that in another minute would have put a stop to the wretched man's ever breathing again; but before the woman could gain the room the infuriated man's grasp relaxed. His rage was checked by the look on Featherstone's face. That look, probably, saved one man from being murdered and another from hanging. Fortescue, in all his fury, could not strangle Leila Featherstone's brother, and a madman to boot. He only exclaimed, "Oh, my God!" turned away, bowed his head on the table, and, by a violent reaction, burst into a passionate flood of tears, the first he had shed since childhood. There is something almost fearful, as it has been truly remarked, in a strong man's crying. It shows not merely such terrible mental agony, but that the physical frame is in a condition that cannot bear the strain. In this case it seemed like the utter break-up of the man's whole being, and the landlady thought she must run for a doctor. The sight brought Alfred out of his own momentary state of frenzied terror, and diverted his thoughts into a channel as much resembling compassion and remorse as his profligate career had left him capable of feeling. Telling the astonished landlady Fortescue would soon be better, that they had only been having a lark, and motioning her out of the room, Alfred drew near poor Fortescue, exclaiming at intervals by way of consolation:—

"Oh, nonsense, Harry. You pretty nearly did for me; but I don't bear malice; can't afford to quarrel. Gammon, don't bother about it so. All right in the end, you know—all right in the end, as you've often said. Come, shut up. Don't, old fellow. Come now——" with similar efficacious and affecting remonstrances.

But those convulsive sobs presently ceased, as the strong will rose paramount once more, and Featherstone's compassion was not very long lived. As Harry drew himself up from the chair to his full height, Featherstone threw himself again on the sofa with an expression of weary disgust, and would have given a five pound note for the privilege of uttering the sarcastic sneer which was on his lips by way of revenge for his ill-treatment, and not less for the maudlin compassion (as he regarded it) into which he had been betrayed by Harry's weakness. But the strange tone in which Fortescue now began to speak—so unlike his usual voice, giving the idea of a man's speaking from the depths of a grave in which he was being buried alive,—and, above all, the tenour of Harry's

address to him turned the current of the young *rouè's* thoughts rather painfully. What he listened to was this:—

“Alfred Featherstone, you are that girl’s brother. That has saved me this evening from an act for which I might have swung. But, I’ll thank you never to put me in temptation again. I see I’ve a good deal of the ruffian in me, still, when I come across a fellow like you; so here we part—once and for all!”

The sarcastic expression on Featherstone’s face died away, and only an abject, imploring look remained, which was almost enough to melt a heart of stone. Fortescue continued:—

“If ever you become as different from what you are now as I am, through your help, from what I was before I knew you, well, then, by God’s help, we may speak to one another again. Never, if you please, till then.”

He took a turn or two, and then, with a great effort, added:—

“I said this to you once before. Would to Heaven I had kept, to it! You are now only blackening my life as vilely as you have done your own. *You* first sent me over the edge; and then, when I got out, you drew me in again deeper than ever. I know I believed then that vice was a necessary evil—vile and beastly, but still necessary. Perhaps I believe so still; but you made me revel and dance in my shame and sin. It was this that brought me face to face, in that disgusting den, with your sister. And that meeting I know has cut me off for ever—from—from,—and just at the very moment when—— Look at these letters, you infernal, double-damned——!” He could not finish his broken sentences. Featherstone gave him a furious look, got up from the sofa, sat down again, and read the notes mechanically—felt half-stunned, and then his brain seemed in a whirl of fire. All he was distinctly conscious of was that Fortescue and he were to part. Here was the end, then, and for ever, of that intimacy which had begun years before—beneath the Thames tide, and which had been for many a day the best blessing, next to his sister’s love, which the poor, broken-down profligate had ever known—a comfort which of late had been the one only thing between him and horrors which he dared not speak or think of. His last refuge from them was now being torn away, and he could have gone down on his knees and implored forgiveness with abject craving, but something in the man’s looks warned him that it was at once useless and dangerous; for the moment that he hesitated to go towards the door to which Fortescue pointed, the breath of the latter came thick, he set his teeth, and griped hard the back of the chair on which he leaned.

“Go!” was all he could mutter; and Featherstone crept out

sullenly, every nerve quivering with a more hopeless sense of utter misery and degradation, probably, than was then being felt by any other wretch in London, unless by those whose next act was suicide.

He crawled home to his lodgings, too miserable and ill even to try to get a companion there for the evening, much more to go to any of his accustomed haunts. He drank off half-a-pint of brandy which he found left in his cupboard, flung himself on his bed, moaning so fearfully that even his landlady, who was used to what she called "the young gentleman's vagarious tantrums," knocked at the door to know if she could be of any service. Three hours later, he was in raging *delirium tremens*, and it took two strong men to hold him.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HARRY FORTESCUE did not realize Featherstone's state when they parted, or he might perhaps have dealt differently with him. But his own misery was so great that he was incapable of reflection. He left his dinner, which had been waiting for him all this time, untasted, put on his hat, took his stick, and mechanically went out into the busy interminable gas-lighted streets. With a sort of instinct of self-preservation from thoughts that seemed as if they would drive him mad, he began walking aimlessly (not knowing or caring where he went) through street after street for hours; sometimes looking at placards on boardings; sometimes intently watching poor, dirty little children at play, or the process by which a cab-driver lifted up his fallen horse. He remembered once stopping at a baker's shop to buy a roll in the flaring gas-light, for he had eaten nothing since breakfast, and but little then. On—on—he tramped again into the New Road, along Tottenham Court Road, up Oxford Street, alone with his misery, in all those crowded thoroughfares, two thoughts alternately racking his mind with intolerable pain. One was—"She knows of it—she knows it!" The other was—"Shameful necessity—shameful necessity." If for a moment something like this came up—"Couldn't help it—nature must win—couldn't help it;" quickly came back the alternative

torture-pang—"She knows of it—she knows it;" and then again the other words returned. And thus two fiends, like the traditional starlings, but one at each ear, chattered as he tramped on and on, he knew not where, till in a lull of rattling wheels he heard St. Clement Dane's strike twelve—the great bell of St. Paul's followed—and he found himself walking on to Waterloo Bridge. When he got to the middle of the bridge he stopped from utter exhaustion, and sank down on the stone bench in one of the recesses. How long he had lain there he couldn't tell. But he was roused by a light, quick, shuffling step close to him. A woman's garment fluttered in his face, and he started up just in time to see the wearer of it springing on the seat, and about to throw herself over the parapet. Fortescue had only time to make one dash at her with his left arm, but that was enough. The poor wretch was like a baby in his grasp; and when she found herself seized, began to sob hysterically. "Curse you!" she screamed, "let me go! let me go! I must do it—I've wanted many a night—never dared before—could have gone then!—and now, now it's all to come over again." Then, with a terrible oath, she cried again, "Let me go!" fighting fiercely at him. Harry tried to soothe the poor wretch, but at first it was utterly in vain. After he had quieted her a little, she kept wailing, "It's all got to come over again—all over again."

A belated passenger or two—highly respectable—thought it was a vulgar row, or drunken disgusting sport. A distant policeman, not having seen the girl's attempt at suicide, shared the same opinion, though he kept his eye on them, and Harry had the work to himself. But as the girl's head, at length, fell wearily back against his supporting arm, the tawdry, showy bonnet fell off. The lamp-light fell full upon the drawn pallid features, *and he knew the face too well*. To his last hour he could never forget the agonizing shame and remorse of that moment. It was some relief that the girl evidently did not at first remember him. He only knew, sadly enough, when and where he had last seen *her*.

"I will save her," was the one thought that now came uppermost. Gradually she gained strength enough to walk, and he led her towards the toll-gate. But she kept stopping, with her hand pressed to her side; and then, in incoherent rambling talk, told Harry of all her sufferings and wrongs. It seemed to calm her to talk, and he let her run on with a description of her life since she was first ruined when in service at Cambridge, every word of which was like a dagger in his heart. Was this indeed the life these women, then, generally led? Yes, yes; he knew it was

only too true. "There were scores," she said, "whom she knew worse off than she was—not one of them but would be glad of pluck enough to face the water." For six months she swore she had been longing to do it, but daredn't. "And now—now," she moaned again, "it would all have to come over again. One minute more, and she'd have settled her hash for good and for all—but now—now." Then a wail, a sob, and a clutching at her poor faded finery."

"For good and all?" repeated Harry to himself. "Where? Is this, then, what I with fifty others have helped her to?"

"Yes, yes, go on, my boy. All right. See, see," whispered the starling-fiends, striking in again, "it's all a shameful necessity—only a shameful necessity. Nature must have its way. This is what you know is necessary—of course, of course—can't be helped. Women must rot that men may live. All right, all right, you old fool! Don't be squeamish. It's only a shameful necessity—can't be helped."

Hereupon the thought came rushing over Fortescue that if by killing himself he could stop all this misery and vice he would do it, though he were to tumble into hell for his own sins the next minute. But the toll-gate was now reached, and the fiends' chatter stopped. They passed through. Harry was looking out for a cab, and resolving to drive straight to a Refuge, which he had noticed formerly in Hoxton, and often wondered if it were of any use in the world to anybody, when the girl refused to go any further, and began hoarsely whispering to him: "I wasn't always like this, you see, though pr'aps never quite particklar enough. I had a good place in Cambridge once. Were you ever there? Rare place that for young men. It was young Featherstone, of Trinity—Freddy, as he told me to call him—was my best friend; and he got me away from service. La! he was a handsome young fellow, and such nice ways with him. How could I help loving him? and I did with all my heart, or I'd ha' gone back to my friends in Devonshire. Cruel young devil, he was, though. I could tell you of a dozen girls beside myself the worse for knowing of him."

"Nonsense," said Fortescue. "Come, my good girl, hold your jaw, and let me get you to where you may be made comfortable a bit."

"I don't want nothin' cumfor'able—and I don't want you—you tarnation big fool! Why couldn't you let me alone? Why, you're the cove that—by G—d I know you, now."

The poor wretch began whimpering again, and then turned and looked wistfully back towards the river. But Harry had hold of

her clammy hand and arm, and gently tried to lead her away. But she obstinately refused to move any further. Presently she continued in a dreary, bitter tone—

“That ’andsome young devil, Freddy Featherstone, after he’d left Cambridge, got me to come up to London, and now he hasn’t been a-nigh me for months, though I begged him to t’other night at the theatre—curse him! and I think I’ve found out where he lives—and if I didn’t care a d—d deal too much for him still, I could make his name stink in every street in London.”

“Hush, hush, my girl. Don’t make a row. Perhaps you haven’t treated him quite well sometimes. But never mind, come on now.”

“No, that’s true, by ——! I did sometimes play him tricks after he once sent me to the bad. But I wouldn’t if he’d been true to me, I swear. I never did, till I found from some of my pals what a nasty lying young beggar he was. Oh, Freddy—Freddy! God have mercy on me! I can’t bear it! I can’t! I’m half dead with aches, and pains, and crying, and rotting, and gin, and my head’s like a boiler!”

Suddenly, with a piercing scream and a convulsive effort, the girl flung off Fortescue’s arm—sprang towards the steps by the west side of the bridge, and rushed down them three or four at a time. Harry was, after her in an instant, heard her fling herself with a fearful shriek into the muddy tide, which was sweeping up stream in great swirling eddies, and just saw her go down into the dark waters like lead. He was now perfectly self-possessed—paused for a single moment to tear off his coat and boots—while doing so shouted “Help!” in a voice that rang clear across the river, up and down, and in the comparative silence of the streets was heard by a policeman even in the Strand. The next moment he was battling with the stream, straining his eyeballs to catch a glimpse of the drowning woman. But the excitement and shock, after the events of the previous four-and-twenty hours, were too much for his exhausted frame. All his past life seemed rushing through his brain in one lightning flash, amid which stood out vividly the thoughts of innocent, beautiful Leila, of Alfred, Gerald, Neville Court, and fair, green fields and sunshine; and then the memory of a similar plunge years before—and then he just saw the miserable creature he was trying to save come floating up to him, with streaming hair and staring eyes, and a pale, paint-streaked face, on which were horridly mingled a smile of gratitude and a hideous leer, and despairing terror,—and he thought she clutched him round the neck, and then he struggled hard for dear life—and failed and went down himself—down, down.

The girl's shriek and Harry's cry for help brought two policemen to the bottom of the steps within two or three minutes after Fortescue had plunged in.

"Thames police, ahoy!" was sung out into the midnight darkness; and then, hoarsely, came back the answer, along with the sound of dashing oars, "Aye, aye! Where away?"

"'Bove bridge—man and woman in!" For the midnight guardians, by the light of their bulls'-eyes, had just caught sight of Fortescue, and inferred there was another victim, from the shriek.

"It might be murder. Man thrown the woman in. Pretended now to be trying to save her. Look sharp." Bulls'-eyes flashed a bright stream of light far up the tide, but neither the men on the steps nor those in the boat could see the faintest sign of either drowning body. Muddy water, swirling eddies, boat-hooks searching fiercely for what would not be found. Drags, nets, buoys—all in vain. Stay! what's this!

"Here, Jack, pull hard. Hold on, you lubber! Catch hold. Keep the boat steady, can't you, and be hanged! Haul up. Coming now—coming. Steady boys, steady. Hand in now. All right. Here they are. Hold tight. Gone, by goles!"

The men had pulled up two bodies—the woman's arms gripping the man tightly round the neck—both apparently dead. As they were brought to the gunwale of the boat, the arms slipped over the head, and the body to which they belonged sank heavily down, just eluding the grasp of two of the policeman. The Inspector in command of the boat swore at the men, who sulkily dragged in the other body, and searched in vain for the one they had lost.

"Come, come—steady, boys, steady. Pull for shore now!" cried the Inspector. "This won't do. We mustn't lose both. Pull for shore. Pull with a will, lads. Pull!"

"Where's t'other?" grunted one of the policeman on land.

"Gone to Davy's locker, I guess. But we'll be after her." So saying, the heavy dripping body was lifted out, and the men re-seated themselves in the boat.

"Come along, boys," growled the Inspector; "try again. No go, I fear. Not a chance. But try your best. Put her along, lads."

It was the man, not the woman, that was saved. Two of the policemen carried the motionless form to a doctor's close at hand, and indefatigable rubbing restored at length the life that had been so nearly extinct. But Policeman X remained at the doctor's on guard. Fortescue was too ill the next day to be moved. When the body of the female was recovered, a magistrate's clerk came for the gentleman's deposition, and afterwards the magistrate him

self. Fortescue had the satisfaction of overhearing a muttered conversation when he was supposed to be asleep, from which he perceived that Policeman X strongly suspected him of having thrown the girl into the river, and gave his evidence with a clear bias in that direction. He was too weak and miserable to care much about this turn in the affair, or to take any steps to clear himself. His only anxiety was to avoid being known, and at all events, by judicious tip to police functionary, prevent his name getting into the papers. When the magistrate's clerk blandly informed him that the coroner feared he must commit him on suspicion of murder, Harry answered with placid composure :

"All right." Adding cheerfully, "If he can commit me to the grave, I've no objection."

And to Newgate he would probably have gone as soon as he was fit to be moved—for he persisted in refusing to give his name or trying to get bail—had not Pierce and Neddy Grant been hunting indefatigably for him as soon as he was discovered to be missing, and not to be heard of at Neville Court. And now Master Neddy's sociable tendencies among the police came into eminently useful play.

One day, as they were tramping to Scotland Yard, soon after the events just related, they met Bob Nicholson in the Strand. He planted himself right in front of the philanthropic pair, stuck his arms akimbo, and, after just one supercilious glance at them, gazed over their shoulders into vacancy.

"What's up now, you son of a gun?" exclaimed Pierce. "Is the Snarley-yow to be presented at Court, or to be flogged for garrotting?"

The filial character thus addressed simply and slightly waved his chin up and down in the air.

"Come, out with it! we've a precious piece of work in hand," cried Ned the Knowing, "and can't wait for your theatricals."

"Exchange, then," grunted Bob; "I've an interesting fact to impart."

"Done! Fortescue's been missing since Tuesday last. Took nothing with him. Left just as a chop he had ordered was put on the table. He and Featherstone had been larking or fighting, says his landlady; but Featherstone's had *del. tre.*, you know, since and can't be seen—so the doctor says—and I know I'd give a dozen of sherry to find my doctor, darn him!"

"Ah!" quoth Bob, "I saw he was going to the bad, weeks ago. That's what comes of prudery; but I don't wonder. That poor varmint, Featherstone, got him in tow at last."

"Curse Featherstone!" cried honest Pierce, for he was an admirer of Fortescue and jealous of Alfred.

"*Somebody has done so*," answered Bob, with due gravity of the scornful kind, "knowing, doubtless, your wishes on the subject. He was taken away from his lodgings to-day by his father, between two keepers, to a private asylum."

"Poor devil!" ejaculated Pierce, compassionately.

"Poor beast!" responded Ned, pensively.

After a second or two the latter remarked, "I knew it must come."

"Yes," responded Bob, "you were always a knowing one. Now for the moral, my little friends. '*Est modus in rebus.*' Farewell." So they parted, Pierce calling over his shoulder—

"Drop in some night, old grunter. I'll get an author or two for you to flay, by way of a jollification;" while Bob, replied—

"Kill your fatted calf when you find the prodigal prude, you ninny, and ask me to the dancing!"

Pierce and Ned walked on for some time in silence.

"Yes," said the former at length, "if the '*rebus*' are of a pretty good sort. But if not—"

"Why then, I suppose, '*est finis in rebus,*'" replied Ned.

"So I was beginning to think," said Pierce, dejectedly.

"Time you did. I've begun serious courtship, I'm glad to inform you. Charming girl—splendid, I may say. Aristocratic connections. Ahem! You know I'm a partner now. 'Grant and Son,' Australian merchants and ship-owners—that's the ticket, my boy. No more of your plebeian ship-brokering now for me. Let me seriously advise you, Pierce, to insure your life, raise money on the policy, buy a neat little practice in a country town, marry a rich patient's daughter (they're easily caught in country towns), and go in for respectability, domestic bliss, and a phaeton. Mrs. Edward Grant and I will visit you in a handsome carriage and pair, to show that you have grand acquaintances, and that will improve your practice. But, at all events, give up bad ways. You've had warnings enough. I should be sorry to see *you* spifflicated. But here's the bobbies' den."

Ned was made welcome at Scotland Yard by one of his chums there, whom he fortunately met in the hall, and in the course of that evening had the satisfaction of handing Fortescue a cup of tea brewed by Pierce, and then of producing a pack of cards. He evidently expected this latter manœuvre would be effectual for raising the patient's spirits, and was greatly disconcerted when an impatient wave of Harry's hand scattered the pack bodily on the floor. Pierce

suggested *Bell's Life* as more cheerful, but was also foiled by the sullen apathy of his patient. When they rose to go, however, they were partially rewarded by the poor fellow's stammering thanks and apologies.

"Well," said Pierce to him as they departed, "we won't let you, anyhow, go to the dogs."

"Nay," observed Ned. "He can't do that. Was he not long ago christened and *sealed* 'Our pet Newfoundland?'"—pointing to Harry's seal memorial ring. A desperately unlucky joke, by-the-bye, like a good many of "Knowing Ned's" witticisms.

END OF PART I.

PART II.



CHAPTER I.

ARLINGTON'S conscience praised and petted him a little while for writing to his friend Harry that letter which was duly chronicled in a former chapter; and, for a time, he was happy accordingly. But then came a natural reaction. Thoughts of that face which he must never look on again with warmer feelings than a brother's, would intrude themselves between the eloquent periods of Demosthenes, and would find him out even when wandering with Socrates and Alcibiades in the groves of Academe, or scampering after a rabbit with his frisky four-footed friend on the breezy downs. This correspondence with Harry, as was previously observed, had revived all his former interest in Leila, and when he ought to have been writing diligently, for at least an hour at his Cyclopædia work, or his tale for "Chambers' Journal," he found he had been losing himself in his own "real-life" novel, dreaming of past scenes and vanished hopes. But at length he rose up against this weakness, sternly drove out every thought of love and womankind, and crushed once again, as he fondly hoped for ever, his rebellious passions. Then came—not peace, but only a cessation of strife, accompanied by a weariness and depression which unfitted him for any satisfactory work in spite of all his efforts. And then a great real sorrow came on him. His beloved dog died—the "last link" between him and the old Hartland days of jollity, when all sorts of happy, high-bred dogs formed an essential element of his youthful existence. It was a beautiful animal, full of affection and playfulness, to which he had always been much attached, but doubly so during his lonely Robinson Crusoe life in his present exile.

"Please, sir, can I get you anything else?" said a soft little voice one afternoon. Gerald looked up from the sofa where he was reclining, and saw the girl who waited on Mrs. Summer's lodgers looking at him with shy compassion out of her blue eyes; for the dinner had been brought up half-an-hour before, and she found it

still untasted, as indeed had happened more than once lately. All the household had mourned with him for the loss of the beautiful loving animal, gone to "The Elysian hunting grounds."

"No, thank you, Jessy. I'll see what I can do with this"—and he turned to the table while the blue-eyed maiden glided meekly out of the room. He wished he could have asked her to stay and talk a bit to him with that soft girlish voice and those dainty little ways of hers. He felt so lonely now, sometimes, and he did so long for woman's tenderness—for somebody to whom he could show kindness, and who could give him just a little sympathy in return. When the maiden first came—about a month ago—she seemed as shy of him as a hare of a harrier, and slipped out of his way as fast as possible. But since he had taken to moping, she had lingered once or twice after bringing his meals or answering the bell, as if she longed to cheer him up a bit. Poor thing! Perhaps she was lonely enough herself, for she was a maid-of-all-work, and there were no children.

"Why, Jessy, you don't seem to be so much afraid of me as you used," quoth Gerald, that evening when the girl was taking away the tea-things.

"No, sir," she answered hesitatingly, and blushing up to her eyes.

"Did you think at first I was a wild beast or a cannibal, eh?"

"No, sir, but——" and she played confusedly with the tea apparatus, like a little coquette, as she was.

"But what?" urged Gerald, getting interested. "Don't be afraid."

"Why, sir, where I last lived, the young gentlemen were sometimes rude, sir."

"More shame for them. And where was that, may I ask?"

"At Mrs. Manville's, sir, Portman Square. She was a cousin of a Miss Fortescue you may have heard of, sir, the heiress of Neville Court, near Dorking." Gerald started, then remembered he was safe under his *alias*, and composedly inquired if she had ever been in service before going to Mrs. Manville's.

"Oh, yes, sir. I was with dear Miss Fortescue three years. She was just like an angel to me and to my poor dear mother. She often writes to me now. I can't tell you how good she has been to me."

"Then why did you leave her?"

Jessy blushed again, looked down on the carpet, out at the window, nearly upset the teapot again, and was more bewitching than ever—and she knew it.

"There was a young man, sir, brought up with us, and he——"

"Wanted to make love, eh?" Gerald was astonished at his own indiscretion; for, generally, he was remarkably reserved in communicating with servants of the fair sex. But there was something irresistibly attractive to him in his lonely estate, just then, in the sweet maiden modesty and confiding grace of this "neat-handed Phillis," and it was such a relief from the dull aching want of old friends to talk with her.

"Well, if he was a good sort of young fellow, why shouldn't he? I suppose we are all meant for that."

"He was very respectable, sir," said Jessy, quietly; "but, you see, Miss Ellen said I was a great deal too young, and then" (pausing a little), "please, sir, she said he was too rough like, and had no hedication" (with a little toss of her head); "and she thought he might take after his father, who was sometimes a great deal too fond of the drink, sir, and so she wished to get me a place away from the neighbourhood. Can I do anything else for you to-night, Sir? I've got to go out for missus."

"No, thank you, my child. Good night."

"She is a very sweet little thing," thought Gerald to himself, musing one evening shortly after this conversation. "God bless her. I hope she'll find the right man to take care of and love her. She'll have need of him" (then a long meditation). . . . "Good heavens, life is getting weary. What on earth is the matter with me? Nothing written to-day, not much more yesterday, and little enough read. Is all my inspiration gone? Gone! Now—now that I have my fate in my own hands—now that nothing hinders my climbing, step by step, to the heights I have so longed to scale!"

He strove hard, read, walked, rowed . . . but his heart ached on. . . . And Jessy was hovering about with officious attentions, full of her girlish happiness and vanity at being spoken to so kindly and sympathizingly by the lonely studious gentleman; and, as her confidence in his gentlemanly demeanour grew, *pari passu*, with her interest in his mysterious sorrows, Gerald felt daily more bewitched by the cunning little maiden's ways and conversations. His imagination invested her with qualities she didn't possess, and he credited her besides, not quite accurately, with perfect artlessness, simplicity, and innocence. Pure and innocent, indeed, she certainly was, but an arrant little flirt and coquette in her heart, nevertheless, with a great idea of captivating some handsome young gentleman by her pretty face and thereby accomplishing a fine match for herself—a design which other pretty girls

of much higher rank than hers have sometimes also been said to entertain. But what was all this to Gerald Arlington? He wasn't looking out for a wife—especially among maid-servants with pretty faces, with no education, and silly ambitions. What business had he to converse with her at all? At length he asked himself that question pretty sternly. Pity he had not done so a little sooner. And then he asked himself another. What is to be the end of all this? The answer was a request to Mrs. Sumner for her bill, followed by payment for a week in lieu of notice, and a departure with bag and baggage by the M—— coach the following day.

Jessy watched him going with the "Boots," who carried his luggage to the inn where the coach changed horses, till he had turned the corner; but he didn't look back. And then she went up to her little room in the garret, and stuffed her head under the bed-clothes that her sobs mightn't be heard, and cried for a good five minutes. He had spoken to her on leaving in a very kind, fatherly way, and the thought of that made her cry the more. But, then, he had given her a very pretty riband, and she could not help leaving off crying to get up and gaze at it, and to see how becoming it looked on her bonnet. Bear up, Jessy; that kind gentleman is not "Mr. Wright." Wait and work, and keep your affiance faithfully to a higher lord—and don't give way to vanity and coquetry. Then, perhaps, the real right man will come along by-and-bye.

Harry's respectability being satisfactorily proved, and no evidence forthcoming against him beyond the policeman X's suspicions, his own statement was, of course, accepted by the magistrate; and Ned the Knowing, with Pierce and Nicholson (the latter being cheerful for that special occasion), having met him in court, escorted him to the door of the carriage, in which his sister was waiting to take him down to Neville Court. He wished the men at Jericho; but they bore him much regard in their way, and had agreed that he needed cheerful society, the want whereof they opined had probably caused his late misfortunes: item—each of them indulged a secret hope and strong desire of getting an invitation to come down and amuse Mr. Fortescue at his charming sister's beautiful home. Instead of this, they only received that lady's very winning and grateful thanks; and each in his way felt for the moment supremely happy as those sweet words and smiles came beaming forth from the interior of the landau. They had done Fortescue one concluding service after he had given them a general sketch of how he had come to be once again engaged in "Salvage service," as Ned Grant professionally described it. They had found out

for him where the body of the poor creature had been buried. She had been interred by the parish in a dingy corner of a frowzy London churchyard, after a coroner's inquest, and the usual verdict of "Temporary Insanity."

So Harry asked his sister to tell the coachman to go out of his way and stop for ten minutes at the corner of a narrow street while he went to look at a pauper-harlot's grave.

Let the weary, sinful body rest there till the day of that judgment which is alike merciful and just; and let one of the partners of her guilt returning from it rest his weary self also for a little while, as he best can, in the quiet loveliness of that peaceful Neville Court, and in the sisterly kindness which still yearned towards him.

Rest! Yes, for a little while. But he heard from his sister how much Leila Featherstone had suffered, not only on her brother's account, but for himself also; and he saw more clearly than ever what he had lost at the very moment when it was within his grasp. He had little doubt he had lost her for ever.

Strange to say, nevertheless, in the depth of her grief and most miserable disappointment, Ellen could not bear to believe her brother must never think again of winning Leila's heart, and vibrated backwards and forwards in her opinion as to whether she ought to try and reverse her young friend's decision. Her's was a very sweet, loving nature, but without any remarkable depth or strength of character, except in her affections and benevolence. She had thought Miss Tylney was perhaps too hard upon young men. She shrank sometimes more from giving pain than she desired to uphold the right; partly because her soul was so child-like in its purity and love that she could not realize the vice and villainy around her. There was more of the angel in her than of the saint; and living in such a world as this, she might easily betray the solemn interests of rectitude and truth, might be unfaithful to the God of holiness simply through her unwillingness or inability to see and believe in the actual state of the world. Her example infected her brother, but not consciously.

"No, no," answered Harry at length with desperate energy; "I know I haven't the ghost of a chance. It's all over. Gerald Arlington, noble fellow, *is* worthy of her; *I am not*—never, never shall be again. He has loved her for years—gave way to me—never gave me a hint of it. Just like his generous self, and I wronged him so shamefully. God grant he may win her at last. Heigho!"

"But dear, dear Harry, don't, pray don't despair. I don't think you ought to give her up entirely. I can't bear to see you so miserable. You have sinned, but is there no place for repentance? You

have won Leila Featherstone's affections, and you have no *right* to give her up to anybody else till you know what are her own real feelings. I don't mean now, but by-and-bye. If she really loves you better than Mr. Arlington she may still have you, and it's for her, Harry, to decide which of you she loves best, not for you." Curiously enough this was almost a new idea to her brother. He grasped for a moment at the hope with piteous vehemence. She continued—"I must, I will tell her it was Alfred who led *you* on, not you that took him astray. I *may* plead for you, Harry dear," and she looked up at him with such yearning tenderness.

"Yes, Nelly, it is right, I see, that she should just know all and then decide for herself. But Nelly"—then with a great effort (God only knows how great)—"she *must* see this letter"—he produced Gerald's last letter to him—"she must know how good and noble he is, and she must know how deeply he has loved her. She hasn't a fair chance unless she sees that letter. But if she does!—There, there, take it; I insist on your showing it, mind, and that settles my fate." Then he turned abruptly away and rushed out of the room.

Miss Fortescue felt almost as great a reluctance to show the letter to Leila as her brother did to send it. She feared that he had scarcely a chance as it was, and that when Leila knew Gerald's feelings Harry might bid farewell to all hope of an engagement, which she believed was, humanly speaking, the only thing that could save him. Nevertheless, she could not disobey her brother. So she wrote that night to Leila, saying she much wished to see her to say one last word about her brother, and enclosing Gerald's letter to Harry, the result being a brief, plaintive request that she would drive over to Wimbledon at the first convenient opportunity. The afternoon of that day found her on the sofa in Leila's little boudoir-study with the poor girl repressing inclinations both to tears and laughter beside her.

"Oh, Ellen, Ellen!" she exclaimed in reply to her friend's timid pleadings for Harry, "I could have loved your brother so deeply; I did once look up to him with such romantic admiration, but I've seen since it was just a girlish fancy, not real love, Ellen. Yet even when I found he did not satisfy the deeper wants of my nature I could have soon loved him, truly, wholly, for I thought Mr. Arlington had no love to give me or anyone—but the Muses! Yes; I could have loved your brother, dearest, I think—yes, so truly—if only—if it had not been for that night."

A burst of tears prevented further explanation, which indeed was

only too little needed by poor Ellen, who did her best to comfort her friend, by crying with her.

"And then this letter, dearest," at length continued Miss Featherstone, holding out Gerald's letter to Harry. "When I had been thinking and trying—oh, how hard!—to see if I couldn't look forward to marrying Mr. Fortescue years hence, this letter, Ellen, has shown me"—and she hid her head in her friend's bosom—"how very, very deeply—without indeed being aware of it—I have loved the writer. Ellen, if you knew how intensely happy that letter has made me, even amidst all the misery of Alfred's illness, you will see (now I know what he has so long felt for me) that I ought not to—cannot marry any other man. I did not know what I felt for him before. I enjoyed his conversation. I was always so calm and glad in his company—he lifted me out of such 'sloughs of Despond' up to high, bright places, and I felt so grateful to him under God for the light and freedom—yes, and peace, which he gave me, but I never knew it was love till—till that dear letter came. Years ago I thought him weak and frivolous, though very fascinating even then. But when others were blaming him so for giving up business to go and study, though I doubted whether he ought to leave his father and mother, I thought there was something so intensely unworldly, Ellie, so generous and devoted in it—you understand me, dearest—that—that I couldn't help thinking about him and caring for him. And now, Ellen, now that I see how he tried to keep your brother out of sin, and that he has been loving me so long, and how it explains his not calling, and all that puzzled me, and—oh! he *is* worthy of all the love I could give him, and of far, far more."

She lifted her head and thrust back the dark hair from her tear-stained face, and looked upwards with that smile of mingled rapture, humility, pride, and tenderness which lights up most women's faces, probably, when they first realize they are beloved by the man who has won their own heart. Ellen thought she had never beheld a vision at once so beautiful and holy. All the more deeply she grieved for her brother's unspeakable loss; so that it was soon Leila's part to comfort Ellen.

"But, my darling," said Ellen, as Leila kissed away her tears, "how can you look forward to an engagement with Gerald Arlington? You know your father's horror of romantic young men without settled incomes or professions. I fear there is sorrow before you, if you really give that poor poet your dear and most precious little heart. And how can you ever come to an understanding with him? He has no right to ask your love. *You* cannot volunteer an

explanation ; you will go pining on for years. He'll never be able to offer such a home as alone would satisfy your father. And how is he to know your feelings ? Oh dear, oh dear ! ”

But the young girl looked up at her tearful friend with a bright, shy, happy glance, and murmured—

“ Ellen, where there is true, real love, don't you think each finds it out at the right time ? and in that mutual knowledge alone is there not joy enough for a life-time ? For the *earthly* union can they not *wait* ? Would not you ? Ah, Nelly dearest, are *you* not waiting ? ”

“ Lily, dear, I was wrong. Yes,” she continued with a heavy sigh. “ If he is worthy of you, you may both wait on, and find ‘ blessedness, if not happiness,’ as the writer of your favourite ‘ Sartor Resartus ’ says. May God help and strengthen and perfect you. Gerald Arlington *shall* know some day—yes, leave that to me—Gerald ought to, in due time shall—know that his self-sacrifice is to be rewarded by my darling's heart. . . . But, one thing, Leila, do you not know he is a Dissenter, and holds very strange opinions. How can such a union be blessed, how can your parents ever consent ? Dearest, I had forgotten this, but, oh, is it not a dark, sad hindrance ? ”

“ No, Ellen, I have thought over all that, many a time. I couldn't help thinking about it sometimes, you know. And I have read, and thought, and prayed, over these differences between Christians, and I do not think there is anything essentially separating me from Gerald Arlington. I have read his favourite works on religion ; they are very dear to me—see, there they are ” (pointing to a set of “ Channing's Works ”). “ He lent them to me first through Miss Tylney, and then I bought them all. I have had such glorious insight from them into the meaning of Scripture and of God's love, that life has become wholly transfigured to me. Do you not think I may feel grateful to him for all this ? . . . Ellen, I never could have borne this great, terrible mystery of Alfred's conduct, and of——” her voice faltered—“ had it not been for these new and precious revelations of our Heavenly Father which He has thus granted to me. Don't look so frightened, dearest Miss Fortescue ; I don't mean that I have given up all my old faith, or our dear old Church, only that his faith seems to supplement mine. I was far more miserable, dearest, before this last blow, while my brother was giving way to his horrid temptations, than I am now that he is struck down and removed from them. Our Father seems to have taken him into His own hands now, and I feel I can give him up to that merciful keeping. I did so murmur,

and struggle, and rebel before, Ellen, yet I could do nothing—I was constantly being beaten back. Now, I have given up everything to God. He will do what is right—wholly what is best for all of us. Ellen, I *can* say—” and the quiet tears were wiped away—“I can say from my heart, ‘His will be done.’ . . . There is an end of sin for my poor brother now. Oh, Ellen, I can see there is no help, no peace, no safety from one’s *own* madness and death but in perfect trust. . . . Mother tried to teach me to give myself up to an Irresistible Will—a righteous, holy Being. Her faith is very lofty and noble; but oh, Ellie, there was no *love* in it. Gerald, and those books of his, taught me to come to a loving Father;—a Father in heaven,” and her voice sank to a tone of mingled gratitude and confiding reverent love.

And so Ellen was brought to peace respecting her beloved one, though to hopeless sorrow for her poor brother. She had witnessed something of Leila’s first fierce paroxysms of agony and despair when Alfred’s state was announced to her; and with unspeakable relief seeing now this devout tranquillity, she took her leave of the poor girl who, hiding both her smiles and tears, accompanied her friend to the carriage-door.

What would not Leila have given to be able, with a good conscience, to let herself be driven away just then with her friend to Neville Court, had not Fortescue been staying there, and had not her father and mother, of course, needed all she could do to cheer and amuse them at home. But from that hour she had a new source of strength. A thousand times a-day came back the thought bringing with it each time a thrill of exquisite happiness. “He loves me, he loves me,” and perhaps that letter which Ellen had sent but did not take away, received those sacred kisses in secret moments, which, in most maiden’s lives, we suppose, herald the far more blessed kiss given at length to the writer himself of some such precious lines—precious, whether on rose-coloured paper or a dirty scrawl. And then there was the secret hope that some day, perhaps soon, Gerald might know all her own deep interest in him and her gratitude to him; and that by-and-bye, in God’s good time, he would win fame and competence, and ask her to share his lot on earth and the home in heaven which she believed awaited the pure in heart and the loving workers of every class. Had she been in the blaze of prosperity, with all her pride and buoyancy of youth and beauty untamed by sorrow, she might not have loved so deeply—nor so greatly prized the knowledge of the love hoarded for her in that romantic student’s heart. But now it was everything to her,—next to the heavenly love; and her parents wondered

whence came the light that brightened her soul and their own sad hearth. She had never played to them or practised by herself—passionately fond as she had always been of her piano—with half the tenderness and power she manifested now.

But there is no perfect peace, apparently, intended for us here. As days passed on a reaction would sometimes cast Leila Featherstone down into darkness; and at such times a deep-rooted conviction, that had first taken possession of her years ago, gained strength, and persuaded her that she was not meant for the happiness of wedded life—that a different work was appointed to her. She fell into sombre reflections, and sometimes thought it more and more probable that it would be her duty to give herself up to a life of active Christian benevolence as a Protestant Sister of Mercy.

Much of the old ascetic spirit of self-denial—fanatical in the extremes to which it had once led her, but sublime in its original purity—came back upon her in these seasons of gloom. Gerald had lifted her for a time out of the fanaticism; but now the possibility of having to crush every tender feeling that gathered round the thought of him only made the greater reaction in her mind against his present views of life and work. Long before he could come forward to declare his love, he might meet with some one whom he preferred to her—nay, having so entirely given up all thoughts of her for his friend's sake, he might have already ceased to care for her. When these fears came over her, she felt with intense and morbid energy that an exclusive devotion to the life above indicated could alone make existence bearable. Then, too, there came at times a vision of a quiet country parsonage—a village church—her husband in the pulpit, or praying by the sick-bed—teaching in the Sabbath school—and she worshipping with or helping him so gladly—so unweariedly.

Ah, if Gerald Arlington could but be a clergyman! that might be heaven on earth.

What was the meaning of all this unhappy dissent and eccentric benevolence? Why was he moving in that comet-like orbit, which seemed to be taking him into far-off realms of icy cold and darkness?

CHAPTER II.

As Miss Fortescue's carriage approached a four-cross way on her return from Wimbledon, the coachman suddenly pulled up. A gentleman on horseback rode to the carriage window. It was Harry Fortescue, but looking so pale and stern that Ellen at first scarcely recognized him in the gathering twilight. He bent forward, and in a hoarse voice said :

"There has been an express sent to say that Mrs. Arlington is very ill—dying—and they can't find Gerald. They want me to help to look for him. I've got the man's horse, and am off to catch the Northport mail for Deansford——" Then, in a whisper, between his teeth—"Tell me, for Christ's sake, is there hope for me?"

At first Ellen could not answer; but her look was enough.

"None!" he exclaimed.

"None," she answered.

He dropped his head on his horse's neck with a groan, and his frame trembled. Ellen could not bear the sight of his agony.

"No, no," she said, hurriedly, in a low voice; "I was very wrong, brother, to say that. It was wicked of me to say there was no hope. I think, perhaps, by-and-bye, Harry,—I *cannot* tell. Oh, Harry, keep your trust—your trust, at least, in God."

But he had struck spurs into his horse, and was galloping up the chalky road like the "wild huntsman" of German legend, leaving her overpowered with grief at his misery, and with her own remorse for having tried to give him a momentary hope. She might well feel guilty: it was a grave error. As for Fortescue himself, could he but have remembered his friend's claims in that moment of anguish, and asked whether there was hope, if not for himself, then for the generous fellow who had so long stood aside to give him room!

Yet, looking at the average run of men, how *could* he be expected to have any thought at such a moment but for his own misery?

Well, in earlier days, Harry would, perhaps, have been an exception to the general rule. His first thoughts then would still have been, no doubt, for himself; but his second would have been for his friend, and he would have asked if he might take comfort at least to *him*. But Harry had deteriorated—as, perhaps most of us

do—for a season, at all events. Passion was stronger and self more tyrannical than formerly. Yet, some would say that to talk thus is as if we had never been in love ourselves. There was less excuse, perhaps, for Ellen's omitting to ask him to give Gerald hope by telling him of Leila's feelings than for momentarily encouraging his own hopes; but what time was there for anything? And how incongruous, too, was the whole subject with the object for which Harry was seeking the poor fellow?

Not so very long after, Harry himself would have confessed with remorse that the question *did* flash through his mind in that brief interview with his sister whether she had shewn Gerald's letter to Miss Featherstone, and whether Leila had then confessed she loved the man of whom he had been so instinctively, though unworthily, jealous. But he could not *bear* in that critical moment to ask the question. The thought was torture. He had so long, and with such strength of passion, looked on Leila as sooner or later to be his wife—so thoroughly accepted Gerald's sacrifice—felt her so much a part of his very being—that he seemed even now, when she had refused him, to have a sort of right to her which, indeed, only her own lips could have given him. "Women," said he to himself, after a time, "naturally resist us, and love us the better for not taking their denial."

So he sped away over the hills, full but of one thought and feeling: "I love her—I love her still! The man or woman who would hinder me from winning her is my deadly enemy!"

Yet this was the man who, a few hours before, had been noble enough to insist on Ellen's showing Leila his friend's letter! Perhaps he felt too sure of his hold on the maiden's heart to fear a rival. But we are all a mass of inconsistencies.

Fortescue reached the town and lodgings where Gerald Arlington, *alias* "George Arkwright" had last been heard of, and to which letter after letter had been sent in vain. Mrs. Sumner and Jessy knew no more than that he had gone down (with the "Boots" from the "Crown" Inn carrying his luggage) to some coach that stopped there to dine. "Boots" at first could remember nothing at all. But a silver refresher brightened up his faculties, and he sent Fortescue off by the next coach. It certainly was the same that poor Gerald had mounted a few weeks before, but, unhappily, it was then going in precisely an opposite direction, "Boots" memory being none of the best under any circumstances, and being a little extra obfuscated just then by potations supplied from the "Crown" tap at the expense of a frisky "commercial gent." So Harry went miles away in the wrong direction—hunted on a wrong

scent for two or three days, and at length got hold of the coachman who had driven Gerald on the day in question, but who had been "off on the spree" for a couple of days, *aliter*, getting married. This functionary was more gifted than the subordinate official at the "Crown," and put Harry down at the very spot where he deposited the broad-shouldered young gentleman "with the pleasant twinkle like o' the eye, and dark chestnut-coloured whiskers." But this was at the corner of a narrow street in a large town, and Harry was utterly at fault. A special message by the fast coach, "The Wonder," to "Ned the Knowing," brought down a detective next day, and, after one more day's search, Harry and his blood-hound arrived at the door of an old-fashioned house in the suburbs of the town. There blood-hound faced about.

"Expect he'll show fight, sir?—handcuffs or barkers, sir?"

"Lord bless you, no, my man—only a friend."

"Oh, I see," said the official, rather disappointed. "All right, sir." Then climbed the stairs, knocked at the door, first pair back, and entered. Bloodhound saw at a glance it was as he had observed, "All right."

"London, sir?" quoth he, aside to Harry.

"Yes, three places by the next. Goes at four. If no room, posters."

"All right, sir." He withdrew, and the two friends were left alone.

Gerald dropped the hand he was cordially shaking, for his heart misgave him.

"Something's the matter. Speak, that's a good fellow."

"Gerald, you did wrong to give us all the slip. I've been nearly a week hunting for you."

"You don't mean it. Good heavens, what's amiss?"

"I don't know that it is as bad as I fear, but when I left London, your mother was ——" Gerald started up with a cry of pain—

"No, no, you don't mean? ——"

"She was very, very ill, Gerald."

Arlington began mechanically stuffing things into a carpet-bag, hiding his face from his friend and muttering, "God forgive me." Then turning abruptly to Harry: "You've ordered a chaise?"

"There's a London coach, Gerry, at four p.m."

"Can't we go before? I've money for posting!"

"The coach will be here in twenty minutes now, Gerald, and if there's room, that's best. It would beat a chaise and pair. Come along. Let me carry that."

Gerald's state of mind as they were whirled along to London was not enviable. Yet what was *his* grief compared with that of his father, the seemingly hard, cold man—great on 'Change—mighty in engineering colossal enterprize, whose life now seemed so splendid and triumphant in its merchant-princely sphere? He had sat by his wife's sick-bed almost day and night, till business matters of painful moment had forced him up to town. Not a clerk in his office, not a friend in the streets, could have formed the faintest idea of what that man was suffering. There were a few who did know that the once gigantic prosperity of the house he represented was undermined, and that the fatal storm which was gathering in America in the winter and early spring of 1837 was charged with imminent peril to all but the very strongest and safest English houses.

But even Mr. Featherstone, who, as we said, was largely involved in a Russian-tallow speculation with Arlington and Co., scarcely now dared to look for any confidence from his friend or to offer any consolation. The fact was, Mr. Arlington could not make up his mind to tell William Featherstone the whole state of the case as regarded his own business, and there he was much to blame. Many a firm was waiting through that bleak March month in gloomy silence for the *denouement* which a brief time would bring; but things at length looked worse for Mr. Arlington's house than he had imagined possible.

To attempt "realizing" *then* would have been fatal. Everything depended on their being able to hold on till the rise should come. That it would come was certain—but the Bank of England was already raising its discounts, and narrowly scrutinizing proffered bills. Day after day it became more evident that the speculators would have to wait for their market until the coming crash was over; and day after day Mr. Arlington met his fading wife with a loving, cheery smile, while he knew that probably before she was in her grave he might be a beggar. Bills must be provided for week by week, and among them the heavy Petersburg paper for which renewal was asked, but refused. Every available security belonging to the house was converted, often at great depreciation. The harassed man ought now to have made a full revelation of the state of his affairs to the partner in his speculation, Mr. Featherstone, but his pride would not let him. He could not bear the thought—he, the honoured head of so old and influential a house, the haughty city potentate, who had so long towered there among the great commercial chiefs of the day, and who had been tardily recognized as the far-sighted leader of enterprises that shed glory

not on London only, but on Great Britain, throughout the world—was he to go, “with bated breath” and cap in hand, to confess to a man who, though arrogant and irritable enough to others, never dared to show anything but deference to Stephen Arlington—was he to go and confess he had been ruining himself and seriously jeopardizing his friend’s business also, and then humbly ask for help to avert a crash? He wouldn’t and couldn’t do it. So he shut his eyes to facts, deceived himself with illusory expectations, and on the whole felt satisfied he was doing all that could be required of him. It was the great error of his life.

However he mortgaged and sold securities right and left, but all to no purpose.

At length the break-down in the speculation was decisive, for it was plain the hemp and tallow must be sold. But though all chance of profit was now gone, the house might yet pull through, for surely Arlington and Co.’s credit was still good in the Bank parlour. The sales were ordered and effected, at a serious loss. Mr. Featherstone was merely told by letter that the speculation had broken down, and the sales made, but that the loss, eventually, would not be serious. A few more days passed. The panic continued.

* * * * *

It was the day before his wife died, and the very height of the commercial crisis. Mr. Arlington was in his counting-house—*waiting*. His confidential clerk had gone with £3000 worth of bills for discounting to the Bank of England. Waiting—. Will they—will some of them—be “condemned?” The door opened; in walked Mr. Weatherley, flushed and nervous.

“Refused any of them?” inquired Mr. Arlington, with a slight tremor in his calm, deep voice.

“All of them, sir,” was the fatal answer.

“Then the end of the matter is not far off,” rejoined his employer quietly. “You may try Overend’s. But it’s no use. However, at the worst, there are ample private securities. We must sell them. Featherstone needn’t suffer.”

It was of no use. Universally as Stephen Arlington was respected on ‘Change, who would be fool enough to risk money on his bills at such a time, now that by forcing sales of the Petersburg goods he had shewn that he had no capital to stand upon?

“Well, at the worst,” repeated Mr. Arlington, “we have solid securities to fall back upon.”

The confidential clerk shook his head doubtfully.

“Nonsense,” said his employer angrily. But he felt the clerk knew more than himself, and he began to doubt a little, also.

So he went down to Hartland that night to watch by his wife's bed through its long, sad hours, knowing the while that all he most dearly loved at home, as well as all that he had lived for in the outer world, was swiftly gliding away from him. It was only a question of hours in the one case and days in the other. But his heart never sank nor quailed. His old Puritan blood and early training had given him not only marvellous fortitude and self-reliance, but the steadfast faith of his forefathers in the "Rock of Ages"—a faith that had been somewhat dimmed in the midst of prosperity, but which he had never let go, even amidst considerable and growing worldliness, and which now no storms could shake. So there he sat and looked across the dark gulf alike of death and worldly ruin with stoical sublimity. But neither fortitude nor faith could prevent the terrible aching pang which gnawed ceaselessly at his heart.

Perhaps it was in mercy that his commercial trials came at the moment when his wife was parting from him. The greater sorrow dwarfed the less, yet he longed—this seemingly cold, proud father, longed for his boy Gerald to be with him—longed, not merely for his poor wife's sake, who in her fast-failing strength still again and again passionately prayed that she might embrace her boy once more before she died, but also because with a father's love he loved him. Her sister Caroline was a great blessing to the mother, but *she* was not her first-born son. Richard came nearly every day, but brought small comfort to either parent; yet his outward behaviour was as correct and considerate as could be desired, only there seemed no heart in it. Gerald, with his warm, loving sympathies, would have been such a blessing to both father and mother in that trial-time, and yet he came not. Letters were sent, and until they came back through the Dead letter office, marked "Gone away—left no address," they counted on him day after day—yet he came not. Each ring of the bell made poor Mrs. Arlington turn beseechingly to her husband or sister, mutely asking them to see if it were Gerald arrived at last. And as the husband sat holding his wife's wasted hand did not sad thoughts and questionings come over him concerning the way in which he himself had dealt with his boy's fine, strong nature, and imaginative as well as benevolent disposition? Certainly there were in that lad, he now began to think remorsefully, the materials for a fine career that might work beneficently on society. Had he, as a father, welcomed the gift God had thus put into his hands quite in the way it required and deserved, might not his son have now been at home quietly working in the direction to which the deepest instincts of his nature impelled him, preparing

for useful public activity instead of wandering lonely, self-exiled from the family circle? What would have been the use of forcing him into business when all his own life-long labours were about to end in dismal ruin? Half-repentant, and wholly-compassionate thoughts like these quenched the indignation he felt at first when, finding his wife suddenly grow worse, he learnt that Gerald had left the town where Fortescue had hitherto addressed him without furnishing any clue to his next residence. Mr. Arlington had reason for remorse deeper than he felt. What duty can be binding if it is not a parent's duty to study his boy's character, qualifications, strongest tendencies, and then as far as possible so to place him in life as to give him the best possible chance of a useful, happy, and honourable career? This Gerald's father had not done, but had blindly forced him out of his natural groove into the sphere for which his own character and abilities fitted himself, but which was utterly unsuited to his son. He was right to demand hard work, stern, unflagging perseverance; right to set his face like a flint against an idle, *dilettanti*, literary life; but surely most grievously wrong not to have helped that son to find a sphere of life and work that would have given fair play to Gerald's great natural powers, and have harmonised his passionate aspirations with the duties and drudgery of daily existence. This would have been perfectly possible if Mr. Arlington had attempted it. Gerald, like all youths with something of genius and strongly-marked tendencies, was not afraid of persevering work; on the contrary, would have rejoiced in it with unflagging ardour and delight had it only been in harmony with the nature which the Creator had bestowed on him. But his father, with all his nobleness, was blind and headstrong, and must reap what he had sown.

Miss Tylney, who had been staying with Mr. and Mrs. Arlington at Hastings, and had of course accompanied them on their return to Hartland House, suspected the change in her brother-in-law's feelings towards Gerald, and gently moved him in the same direction.

Perhaps the absence of all reference on her part to the warnings and entreaties she had ventured to offer so totally in vain, years before, in regard to Gerald's being compelled to enter the counting-house, was more goading to her brother-in-law's conscience than any amount of innuendo or reproach.

Meantime, on the day when the bank refused to discount Arlington's bills, Harry and Gerald sped along, having the back seat frequently to themselves, as fast as the blood-horses of the Shrews-

bury "Wonder" could lay legs to the ground, both of them sunk in dull wretchedness. The detective sitting on the roof and the guard standing on the bootstep in front were engaged in profound betting calculations with the coachman, varied with the recital of sundry sensational tales and much autobiography.

At length Harry tried to cheer his friend, saying—"Don't be too much down, that's a good fellow; she may rally yet."

"I never meant that you should none of you know I had left Deansford," replied Arlington, sadly, "but I kept putting off writing, for I hugged the thought of being cut off from all friends and home. It wasn't right, I know, but you see, Harry, I could only go through with my plan by a great enthusiasm like that which has sustained many a fanatic, in the Church and out of it. But did you never have a few lines I sent to your lodgings more than a fortnight ago?"

"No, I've been away. Good heavens! how strange, I never thought of going there to see if you had written! But that miserable landlady should have forwarded the note. Gerry, I've been very ill; I'm as unhappy as yourself—more so, a thousand-fold. But I won't bore you about it now."

"Tell me all, Harry. It's the best thing for me, honour bright, if it is for you."

Then with great effort, stammering sometimes as if his words would choke him, Harry gave his friend a brief sketch of his downward course, of Mr. Watson's advice, of the scene at the theatre—then of Mrs. and Miss Featherstone's letters, of Alfred's baseness, of the Waterloo Bridge struggle, and of the past few weeks—ending with the account of his sister's visit to Wimbledon. Gerald's first feeling was one of greater unhappiness than, until an hour or two before, he had ever felt in his life. Harry saw that the long dreaded gulf was indeed then beginning to yawn between them. In spite of the desperate yearning efforts Gerald was making to overcome his disgust and cling with his old affection to his friend, Harry *knew*, without many words passing, that it was in vain. So when he came to his sister's mission to Miss Featherstone, and watched how intently Gerald was listening, marked Gerald's involuntary though momentary thrill of happiness, as, after a sudden pause, Harry shot out Ellen's answer to his question, the miserable man, of course, writhed with intolerable pangs of jealousy, and with deliberate emphasis immediately added his sister's retraction. For in that wretched moment there came sweeping over him the irresistible feeling of having a *right* to Leila. He had never known how passionately he loved that girl until all hope seemed gone

He *could* not give her up; but he did not yield to the ungovernable impulse without a struggle. He looked at his friend's pale, dejected face, on which the brief gleam of selfish joy had been quickly succeeded by a look of quiet suffering, and he almost murmured, "Gerry, boy, *you* only have the right to win her. She has given me up, and you are worthy of her. Now and for ever, good-bye to my dream! May God grant her to you, you deserve her!"

A solemn voice was bidding him do this, and to let Gerald know that he had sent Leila his friend's last letter to himself. He heard the voice plainly enough, but fiercely drove it from him. The words he should have uttered—at one moment longed to utter—seemed as if they stuck in his parched throat. Strange that he could do the right thing in sending the letter, and yet not tell of it, not act up to that righteous act. No, not strange a bit. "Could we but *keep* the heights which we are competent to gain—" Wordsworth never wrote a truer word. But we can't. And more than once since Fortescue had sent the letter he bitterly regretted having done so, and if he had had the power of recalling it he knew he would have used it. When he gave it to Ellen he was unconsciously clinging passionately to the hope that Leila would say Gerald was right, and that she ought, after all, to give him (Fortescue) space for repentance, time to recover his right to claim her as his wife.

Then, again, during his weary hunt for Arlington, Harry had been constantly thinking his sister might have been mistaken in Leila Featherstone's actual though probably unconscious feelings.

"Girls never know their own minds, or don't like to show them. She'll change hers half-a-dozen times, depend upon it," he said to himself more than once. Was it likely Mr. and Mrs. Featherstone would have asked him to Wimbledon, after all that had passed, if they hadn't reason to know their daughter was really in love with him? And if a girl were to let a man's little casual sins forbid her marrying him, who would be wed? The voice tried to answer, "Those, at least, who are *equally* pure may love and marry." But he would not listen. Now if Ellen had but courageously told her brother that she *knew* Leila had given her heart irrevocably to Gerald Arlington, all this would have been prevented; but she didn't. So Harry's wrath and passion conquered him. He said no more, but looked again in Gerald's face. Not another word was spoken for some time by either of them. The coach whirled along. They looked at an old man breaking stones by the road-side, and perhaps wondered how much he got for it; and then perhaps thought how

love affairs had sped with *him* half a century ago ; and rather envied him his dull insensibility and mechanical existence. Then they both caught sight of a hare scudding across a distant park glade, and memories came over them of bright October early runs with the beagles, when their life was as fresh and beautiful as the sparkling dewy morning. Then the coach stopped at the corner of a lane where a boy and donkey-cart waited in stolid patience, and where they helped their only companion, an old woman with a bundle, to get down from the back of the coach. Then they saw her safely deposited in the donkey-cart, and galloped off again to the merry crack of the long lash and the stirring notes of the guard's horn. Still, not a word. It seemed hours of suffering to Harry.

"Gerald," said he at length, "you must despise me. I know you do. But you don't know what the temptations have been. And it's partly because I have not quite forgotten my father, and the resolves and dreams of our boyish days, that I do so cling still to the hope of one day calling Leila Featherstone my wife. I can't tell you how I do loathe and hate those vile, nasty ways I got into again ; and it's because I know the hope of at last winning her pure, noble heart is now my only chance—that—that —But you needn't look so glum—I can't tell you what misery I've felt—you've no need to scold—I'm sunk low enough."

Still there was silence. Gerald was trying to speak. At length—

"Harry," he said, "don't talk to me, at all events in that dismal way about your being sunk so low, &c. I think that must be said only to God. It only helps me to play the Pharisee. But you know *I am* very, very sorry. I can't tell you how wretched you've made me. I thought you had put away all that sort of thing. But *I* can't give you absolution ; and I'm in only too much danger already of thinking unjustly and conceitedly about our respective moralities. I've quite enough of the devil in me, only circumstances have been more in my favour, and against you, in that one direction ; and according to your own account, it was just that making an idol of health (as I thought you would, and as I might have done in your place) that did the mischief. But please don't talk, old fellow, as you did just now. If you want our friendship to last on, I'm glad and thankful you know. It would be a poor sort of friendship that broke up just——"

"Just when most wanted," murmured Harry. "God bless you."

"Don't you see, Harry, I want *you* as much as you do me. But I was going to say,—just because one's friend has been overcome in a great battle, where the odds were so much against him, I

hope we are neither of us so base as to desert each other. I shall care for you more, Harry, in one sense. I mean because I think perhaps you may want me more than you used. You never used to seem in need of anything I had to give, except my company and chatter."

Harry squeezed his friend's hand and rubbed his own eyes; but beyond that there was no demonstration—no fussing. They understood each other, and that was enough. Yet both felt that a change *had* come over their friendship. It was a very different feeling in some respects that was uniting them now from what they had known in former days. Miles passed away in silence. At last Harry's third cigar was smoked out, and as he chucked away the end, he said, rather moodily:

"Gerald, haven't you got a word to throw to a poor dog? You talk well about not having lost regard for one; but what were you thinking about—now honestly, old boy?"

"Not about your sins; or my own either, for that matter, Harry, Heaven knows," answered Gerald, sadly.

"What then?"

"Probably of one who has loved me, most likely, more than any other woman ever can, or will."

"Poor Gerry," said Harry. He tried to speak quietly and sympathetically, but he was sitting on the safety-valve. After awhile he added—"And sometimes you were thinking about that in me and my life which no love of man or woman for me can ever mend. God help us! . . . When I think of what I've lost, I'm ready to knock my brains out! But is it all lost? I don't know that I mayn't still have a chance. Girls change their minds. . . . Well, well; it never can be again," he added, with a groan, "as it once might have been."

"Aye," replied Gerald, "but how little most fellows think of that! Even you, it seems to me, Harry, are not troubling yourself half as much about the cause of all this misery and loss as about the loss itself."

"Oh, hang it, Gerry! how *can* I help thinking most of that. I've told you how I hate the other thing; but after all, nature is nature, and I don't know——" (Pause.)

"Well, if you don't, Harry, I do. You asked me to speak out, and it would be cowardly and mean of me, just because we both so much want our friendship to last, to pretend I think you are looking at the whole business altogether as you ought to do, and used to do."

"We are none of us perfect," muttered Fortescue.

"God knows I'm not, Harry, and I didn't want to say anything; but I'm not going to say black's white, because I care for you as much or more than ever, or because I know something of my own sins—or because it seems to me you have made for yourself just an irreparable loss. That poor wretch now lying in a pauper's grave, whom you told me about, has still a word or two to say to us, Harry, about this infernal curse which eats the heart out of so many men's higher life. Hasn't she? And we musn't be deaf to it, or forget it all, I suppose, yet awhile."

Silence again.

"Go on," said Harry, half sullenly.

"I don't want to go on, Harry. It's just the hardest job I have ever had. I know that. But it's no good shirking it. But I won't go on unless you bid me, Hal."

"Stay," said Harry, with suppressed vehemence, laying his hand on Gerald's arm. "When you spoke of my loss just now, did you—did you mean as to Leila Featherstone? Take care."

"No. I'll say what I think about her presently," answered Gerald, removing his arm from his friend's gripe. "I meant a greater loss than even her love as you yourself would have said, and did say, years ago. But you are not in the mood just now, and unless you bid me speak it would be only priggish of me, and useless, too, to go on."

"But I do bid you," exclaimed Harry. "I do want you to speak out. We are not friends if you don't!"

"Well, then," said Gerald, firmly, "I only thought you did not seem to see that the loss of purity of heart and life was a far greater evil than even the loss of Leila Featherstone's love. You seem to me to be thinking and caring ten times more about what she has been, and may be, to you than what——"

Harry filled up the pause by saying, "Than what Polly Fielding, &c., have been to me?"

Gerald nodded; then added in a low voice: "*And yet may be.*" After a little while he went on. "And that you shouldn't see all this seems to me, perhaps, the worst part of the whole affair as far as you are concerned." Another long pause, broken at length by Gerald saying in a husky sort of way, "But as to Miss Featherstone, will you tell me what your idea is then—" The speed was slackening, and the coachman pulled up at a large inn.

"Stop here, gentlemen," quoth he. "Ten minutes for tea."

"Let's walk on, Gerry. It will do us both good, unless you are peckish. I don't want to eat yet again. But I must wet my whistle

and treat my blood hound. I'll just have a glass of brandy and water," added Harry, as he strode up to the inn.

"Don't," remarked Arlington—of course, in vain—but eventually he got Harry away with only two drams for himself and ditto to the detective; then officially announcing to the ostler their intention to walk on, with injunctions to look after their overcoats, the young men set off at a round pace.

"Well, about Leila Featherstone," began Fortescue with some constraint. "I mean to act upon the generous advice you gave me, Gerry, in your last letter, and never despair. Her father has evidently relented—is taking me into favour for his daughter's sake, I honoured you, let me tell you, more than I choose to say, for your disinterested sacrifice (if, indeed, you ever had any chance with her), and I don't believe you met her by appointment at young Featherstone's lodgings. But, you see, you *have* given her up, and I suppose you don't mean—I won't wrong you by supposing you do mean—to draw back now. I won't lose her, at any rate; and he's no friend of mine who tries to hinder me from marrying her. She *must* care for me. Why, if she didn't, would her father have let her mother write me that letter?" And his voice rose loud and hoarse. Then dropping it, and speaking through his set teeth. "At all events, I have loved that girl too long and too well to believe I am called to give her up now. I spoke to her before anyone else—as far as I know, Gerry, and if she will have me—if by any conceivable means I can yet get her to listen to me—by the heavens above us—mark me, I'll have her—I will! And may God or the devil keep me from seeing any other fellow try to win her, for his sake as well as mine!" And he swung his stick fiercely round his head.

"I gave you that advice, Harry, remember, which you speak of," said Gerald, with great effort, but pretty calmly, "and gave up all my own hopes, when I thought you were worthy of her."

"Oh, I see! You think I am *unworthy* now. Perhaps I never was worthy of her, my boy, nor anybody else that I know of. But it won't do to wait till the skies fall to catch larks. No, I'm not worthy of her, but I mean to marry her, Gerald Arlington, for all that. Do you think *you* are worthy of her? By ——! I know I'm sunk low enough; but don't you see she may better me, and *make* me worthy of her when I have married her"—and he laughed a bitter laugh.

"Poor Leila!" was all his friend answered, as he looked over a gate at the distant country.

Fortescue was now fast getting into a terrible rage, and his

companion's next words didn't diminish it. For Gerald, looking up sternly into his friend's face as he turned to resume his walk, said—

“Harry, you have no right to ask that girl to marry you.”

“No right! You are a bold man to speak so to me, Arlington.”

“Bold! Yes, by heaven!” answered Gerald, stopping and facing round. “I *am* bold enough to trust you still—bold enough to appeal to your better self—to all in you that I have loved and honoured for many a day—to all there is of your father in you, Harry Fortescue; and I ask you by your love for Leila Featherstone, if she is not deserving of something better than to receive only the love and kisses that have been shared by prostitutes?” Fortescue uttered a terrible oath, and struck his stick madly on the gate. Then Gerald burst out with—

“Harry, I tell you, as sure as God's in heaven, you must *not* try to win her now!” If Gerald had been a little more prudent he would not have said all this just then. *But he knew he had got to say it*, and he had an overpowering feeling that if he didn't say it then he should never be able to say it at all. The consequences were serious.

When a fine-natured, conscientious, but passionate man (or especially a woman of that cast) once goes thoroughly wrong, the very consciousness of his or her wrong-doing and false position often seems to drive them more obstinately and even furiously forward from bad to worse—partly because they are so intensely miserable, and seek to drown the voice of conscience in the vehemence of passion; partly because they want to persuade or prove to others and themselves that they are in the right, and are injured individuals. So there were these young men in the gathering gloomy twilight on a lonely road, both tremendously excited—one of them, as once before said, with a ruffian latent in his nature, now lashed up almost to madness by his rival's last speech, and grasping a heavy knotted stick. Why *doesn't* the coach overtake them? Surely it is time. Can they have taken the wrong road? It was just the place and occasion for a deadly crime—just the circumstances under which many a life has been taken in a moment of sudden frenzy, to be repented of for ages with tears of blood. And if that heavy stick which Fortescue is even now fiercely throwing up dashes out Gerald Arlington's brains as it comes down, and which it seemed as if none but Fortescue himself, or a Higher than man, could then have prevented, it would only be such a murder as might have been expected from the nature of the man, and the life he had been leading for a long time past—such a

murder as the first woman's first-born had done ages before—aye, and such as poor Fortescue in his desperate combativeness and passionate indignant strength had been not long before on the very point of committing.

That second glass of brandy and water was a considerable mistake. * * * * * *

As Fortescue's stick was flung fiercely up, and his eyes flashed with ungovernable rage, Gerald began to realize his danger; but, though his blood ran cold, the thought of defending himself against his old friend—of fighting him, in fact—seemed too horrible to be entertained, even if the light umbrella in his hand would have been of any use for that purpose. But, as in all such cases, there was no time for thought. Everything seemed confused and terrible. Arlington only knew that he had said what he felt he must say, even if he died for it the next minute. He couldn't believe Fortescue really meant to hit him; but if he did—well, let him! Hence, though every nerve quivered with excitement, he looked his assailant coolly in the face, and merely said, "Don't be an ass, Harry."

"Curse you!" yelled the infuriated demon in Fortescue's heart, and down came the huge stick.

It struck—not his intended victim, but the ground, with tremendous force, for, like a flash of lightning, Gerald saw the man who wielded it thrown heavily on his back, tripped up by a dexterous back-heeler from some dark figure who had rushed at Fortescue as the stick was dashing down on Arlington's head. In another second the new-comer had slipped his handcuffs over the prostrate madman's wrists with the ease and swiftness of a juggler, and was coolly helping his prisoner to rise. Then Gerald recognized his preserver as the London detective. Fortescue looked so utterly bewildered, as he stood for a moment, helplessly, with his folded hands before him like a guilty schoolboy, and the whole affair was so extraordinary that, by a violent reaction, Gerald for the life of him couldn't help laughing. But one glance at the dead, despairing look, on Harry's face, which was as white as a sheet from his fall, and the growl and shake of the head of the policeman as he gripped Harry's arm to lead him back towards the inn, made them both realize the seriousness of the situation. The detective had been rather bored by the flatness of the whole expedition, and felt braced up by having a little professional business.

"Lucky for you, young gentleman, I took it into my head to

stretch my legs a bit, and follow you," remarked the guardian of the law to Arlington. "I suppose you give him in charge, sir?" he added, seeing Gerald plant himself in front of him and his prisoner.

"No, by Jove; I don't do anything of the kind!" cried Gerald, wrathfully; "and you'll have the goodness to take off those metals instantly. If he goes anywhere, it should be to the doctor." Then, seeing the mystified and considerably disgusted look on the face of the detective, who, instead of showing any signs of compliance, was gently impelling Fortescue forward, Gerald continued, "But, 'pon my word, I'm very much obliged to you, my friend, all the same—only, you're taking things a little too seriously."

"We shall see about that, sir, when we come before the magistrate," replied the man, surlily.

"Come, nonsense," returned Arlington; "it was only a row between two old friends. No harm done—except to him, I'm afraid. I don't give him in charge. Come, off with the rings!"

"He shall leave them alone," growled Fortescue; "I mean to wear them a bit longer."

"That's lucky," responded the detective. Suddenly the sound of wheels was heard.

"Hark!" cried Gerald. "By George, there's the coach taking that lower road! We've come the wrong way. Hillo, ho-o-o-a!" he shouted, at the top of his voice, sprang over the gate, called to the other men to follow, and ran across the field at full speed. A few words from Harry explained to the policeman why he and his friend were in haste to return to town, and, finding Harry quite willing to wear the hand-cuffs, and not really much the worse for his fall, the constable helped him over the gate. They soon reached the spot where Gerald, having stopped the coach, was mildly endeavouring to appease the dissatisfaction of the crusty coachman and the stylish guard at this detention.

"But the sign-post," quoth Arlington.

"Ah, yes, sir," interrupted the guard; "but old sign-posts, don't yer see, are like old parsons—shew the former roads, but are shy of the new ones."

With Gerald's help, Fortescue hid his imprisoned hands under his overcoat to avoid observation, and they were all soon again mounted and off.

As they whirled away, the guard, who had resumed his place behind, informed them that they were already behind time, for the near-wheeler wouldn't start, and they had had to get a kicking-strap.

"We should many of us be the better for that," remarked the detective.

Gerald's first inquiry was as to Fortescue's health. Harry admitted he had got a bit of a head-ache, but it was passing off and didn't matter ; which, however, it would have done, considerably, to any other man. When the guard and policeman got into quiet confidential talk, Fortescue began muttering to Gerald, who had lapsed into a very dreary state, "God help me, Gerry, I'm going off like Featherstone."

"Stuff!" answered his companion. "It was only the brandy and water."

"No, no—I'm a desperate brute at bottom, and that's the fact."

"Well, you looked rather like it just now, I must admit, Hal ; but I gave you great provocation."

"Yes, but I knew all you said was true, and that made me all the more savage."

"God knows you've had enough to try you, Harry."

"So have you—and you are not wearing these things. Look here, Gerald, I ought to have known better, for I nearly murdered young Featherstone three or four weeks ago—that horrible night, when— But look here. D'ye see? I am going to buy these bits of steel of him when he takes them off, and I mean to keep 'em for life in my coat pocket. D'ye see? Oh, Lord, when's the end of all this coming? I know, Gerry. The end *has* come in one sense. Just listen ; from this time forth, I'm a changed fellow. I've done with women of all sorts for evermore, and with fighting and brandy-and-water ; and when I begin thinking of either, I shall finger my bracelets, and just think I'm looking at you lying in the road out there, in a pool of blood, with your brains on my stick. . . ." The man broke off with a horrid shudder. Gerald saw he must stop that sort of thing at once, but not by indifferent chatter.

"Well, well, I'm not there, you see, nor my brains either, but here, safe and sound ; and we still believe in a Providence, Harry (don't we?), who looks after us a bit. But my dear old Berserkir, if you want to improve the occasion, let me observe, first, that I highly commend your notion about the bracelets. A fellow can't have all your immense energy and combative power without being a bit of a ruffian below the skin. And, secondly, if you ask me, I quite believe in giving up the brandy *ad infinitum*, and the fighting for the most part, and in a total change of some sort. *You* know best what to change to, and you'll soon throw an amount of vis and

fag into your draft and pill business, which will some day make the College of Physicians open its eyes. But then, thirdly,—now, are you listening, Harry boy?"

"As I've never done before."

"Then, thirdly, don't make rash vows about womankind. Can't you go through your day of purification, though it last for years, like the brave old ruffian which, no doubt, you are—and knock out your own brains, if you like, by all means, rather than slide down again into the filth? But *don't* let *your* manliness and self-respect hang on the favour of a woman's smile, however lovable she may be. Try and deserve her, Harry, and she may yet be your wife" (Harry impatiently shook his head), "but that's not the question. You can live a grand life, I fancy, without ever seeing her again. But what I mean is, don't determine you are *not* to marry her, nor any other woman. The right one will come at last—when God sees you are prepared—unless, by-the-bye, you go to heaven first."

"Thanks, Gerry—from the bottom of my heart—thanks. But it's all over with me, as far as that poor little witch is concerned, whom an hour ago I could have murdered you to marry. It's as plain as a pike-staff to me now that *you are* worthy to have her, if she'll have you, and that I'm not, and never shall be, through all eternity"—(A heavy groan)—"and I'm pretty sure she does love you."

"I say, Harry," interrupted Arlington, "thank you kindly all the same, but please don't Even if that girl cared a straw about me, which I don't believe she does, I've no heart to think of love-making now."

"I beg your pardon," said Fortescue, penitently and sadly. "What an immeasurable brute I've been."

"Oh, nonsense, never mind; only remember this, Harry. You may be a precious deal worthier of her in the sight of God than I, in spite of the worst you may have done. So never say die, old fellow. But anyhow, I'm not going to try and draw Leila Featherstone (may the Lord bless her!) away from you. You know, or ought to know, there's nothing on earth I wouldn't give up for you, as far as I alone am concerned—yes, of course I mean it, even *her* love, supposing I could win it if I tried. Therefore I am not going to try. But mind, I don't say I would give it up even for you, if I *had* won it; for I know that would be to sacrifice *her* happiness as well as my own—that girl won't love by halves—and I should have no right, mind, to do a thing like that for you, or anyone." (Harry nodded gloomily.) "But if she has really loved you, be sure she'll not marry anybody else in a hurry; and then years hence you'll be able to come to her and ask her to forgive you, and perhaps she'll be

your wife after all. But oh, Harry, by all you—we—have ever held sacred, don't try, I implore you, don't try to win her now."

Fortescue seemed utterly unable to answer. When he found words, he stammered out, "God bless you, Gerry; but—but—can't you believe me when I said from this night I give up all thoughts of——"

"No, no," interrupted his friend vehemently. "Don't talk so—I *do* believe you—it's all right—we understand each other—all right"—and he took one of Harry's manacled hands, and their grip was fervent and true as ever.

So on they went through the gathering darkness of the April evening, silently, sadly, until Fortescue suddenly roused himself, and whispered, "What about this confounded detective? I shall settle a pension on him some day; but just now it would be a great bore, having to go to Newgate, or even before a magistrate." Arlington could just see something of the old smile on his friend's face, and felt considerably relieved in consequence.

"I'll settle all that," he answered; and forthwith applied a few cogent arguments to the worthy functionary in question, which had the desired effect. There was clearly no necessity now for his keeping Fortescue in custody. The hand-cuffs were accordingly removed, and changed owners; Harry's first use of his freedom being to give the policeman a hearty shake of the hand, while his second was to transfer nearly all the money in his purse to the said official, partly, as he remarked, in payment for the hand-cuffs, but chiefly, as he privately observed to Gerald, as "a thanksgiving offering." "Get your wife, if you have one, Mr. Atkins, a fancy silk gown; and remember, I shall thank you, old gentleman, for what you've done to-night, as long as I live." Mr. Atkins was pleased, and expressed himself grateful, in a manner the reverse of gushing.

Still the coach whirled on, rapidly nearing the great metropolis, while the two friends silently sat and mused the rest of the way, exchanging only a word now and then of friendly cheer. Throughout the journey, when not absorbed in his friend's matters, poor Arlington had been involuntarily thinking over the wonderful mother-love which the recollections of bygone days brought up before him. Memories especially of those quiet Sunday evenings in his holidays, when she used to have him in her little boudoir and talk and read to him in a way he now felt had been of deep infinite worth; and the more he realized what his mother had been to him, the more he marvelled at the comparative indifference he thought he had shewn to her society and wishes—at the little time he had given to her, even when it was in his power; and how very

little he had done to return that affection which he now saw had been so unceasingly poured out on himself. And then to think of all the cruel desertion of his home during these last few months, when her health was failing, and when he might have comforted and amused her; when, perhaps, she had been longing to see him and talk to him. Recoiling from the misery of these thoughts in his remorseful indignation, he flew for refuge to the thought that perhaps that dear mother's life might still be spared—a little while—and he might yet be permitted to show her some of that warm affection which now welled up in his heart.

CHAPTER II.

“Too late—too late.” One glance at the face of the old butler, as the cab pulled up in the light of the opened front door, one sorrowful shake of the head was enough. God comfort him then. We can have but one mother. He had come in time, indeed, to look on the pale face, so calmly beautiful—but it would never look on him again. * * * * *

Certainly, few persons know what they owe their parents till they have children of their own; and then how often it is too late to use their knowledge.

The melancholy days went on. Not a word of reproach passed Mr. Arlington's lips. Gerald felt his own anguish dwarfed before his father's silent but far deeper grief; and he would have sacrificed every hope he had on earth to have been able to relieve that grief in even a slight degree. Under the pressure of all this sorrow he began to think he must have been wrong in thwarting his father's wishes. Nothing in life now seemed much worth doing, except some very plain, humble duties, among the first of which was to help and comfort him.

“Father,” he said, after they had come back from the funeral, as Mr. Arlington was rising to leave the dining-room (Richard having gone into the drawing-room, and Miss Tylney to her own room), “if you will let me, I will come and live at home with you now; and work as hard in the counting-house as ever you did yourself. I think I did wrong in going away; but indeed I thought it

was a duty to go. I know I had a good purpose, but perhaps it was all a mistake. I have no wish now but just to earn my own livelihood in your office—at all events, for the present; and to try and make up to you for the past. May I come back here and go into your business?"

It was some minutes before his father could answer. "No, Gerald," he said with effort, and some sternness. Then in a more affectionate but still constrained tone, "Thank you for wishing it—but we have no home now, and I have no business. My creditors will sell Hartland." (Gerald started.) "She who made it a home to me—lies—in the churchyard. I couldn't live here without her, even if I might—but in a day or two I shall know more. I do not expect to have any business at all, Gerald, before long. Say nothing about it at present to Richard or Miss Tylney, but I am feeling the pressure of the times very severely. I can't talk about it now. But I'll tell you more as soon as I can. Stay here, my dear boy, at present," added Mr. Arlington, kindly, as he noticed traces of suffering on his son's face. "And study as hard as you like. You can have the chesnut to ride when you like—till she's sold."

Richard came and went as heretofore—but was more reserved than ever. His brother saw, not without additional remorse, that any little increase of brotherly regard and intimacy which had manifested itself at first after Richard's return from Canada had quite vanished. And he asked himself, How could it be otherwise? He had not been devoting himself to his brother's improvement, but to that of the world at large. Yet social reformers are wanted badly enough, Heaven knows! And they can't attend to everything.

Miss Tylney was truly "the Angel in the house," as she ever had been, but more than ever during the next few weeks. A holy presence seemed brooding over the once bright and happy though (in a better than the ordinary sense) too worldly home. Never had it seemed so beautiful to Gerald, with all its luxuriance of flowers and foliage—the pretty fanciful little flower-beds cut out at the sides of the lawn, which had been his mother's special care, its winding walks and verdant turfy slopes, its magnificent elm trees and honeysuckle bowers, its quiet shady lakelet, and long sweep of park-like meadows beyond

Alternating with the melancholy remembrance of her whose irreparable loss he had just sustained—holding whose hand he had first pattered with tiny feet along those walks—and with whom his beautiful home had so many dear associations, tender and mirthful, there still came a soothing sense of home-like blessedness after his lonely exile, as he looked on those dear scenes of

his bright boyhood, but which he now found he should probably soon have to leave once more, and for ever.

A few days after, Mr. Arlington asked Gerald to ride up to town with him, observing that he wished him to call on Mr. Featherstone with a note and wait for an answer. "I would rather not send either Weatherley or a clerk," he added. So Gerald went. Mr. Featherstone received him kindly, inquired with some feeling after his father, spoke of his bereavement, and then referred nervously to Alfred's deplorable condition. "But I shall always feel grateful to you, Mr. Arlington, for the part you invariably acted towards him. My poor girl, Leila, has been to see him this morning—much against my will, but she would go. And she says he kept harping on you, and what you used to say to him to keep him out of mischief, and how it would have been well if he had cared for you and your advice a little better. Well, well—Heaven help us. I hope you are going to give up your vagaries now, Mr. Arlington, and harness in. Your father needs all you can do for him. I'll see this gentleman whom your father speaks about. I suppose you have heard of our anxieties. The times are very bad. I wish to goodness your good father had never persuaded me to run such risks—but, so, so—he'll pull through. Things look better just now. We may do very well yet. Just sit down in that room till I return. There's only my daughter there, waiting till Mrs. Featherstone calls for her in the carriage. I wish my wife would come. I don't like Leila to sit moping there alone so long."

And he motioned Gerald towards a parlour adjoining the counting-house where Leila was sitting.

"*Only my daughter,*" repeated Gerald to himself. The very last person on earth he would have wished to meet. His heart ached miserably.

"*Only one of the most bewitching, loveliest, purest-hearted beings God ever sent on earth in the form of woman. And I have loved her as deeply as ever man loved woman. And what would not her love be to me now! But I must never tell her—must not even love her as I have done—only think of her as years hence, perhaps, to be Harry's wife—*"

He had almost persuaded himself that he longed sincerely for the day when she should be so—that he had ceased to be very deeply interested in her, until he found he was to meet her thus unexpectedly; and then— He would have made some excuse for retreating, but it was too late. Mr. Featherstone was too much pre-occupied with his own anxieties to notice Gerald's agitation, and threw open the door, saying, "Leila, my dear, here's young

Mr. Arlington. He'll be glad to hear anything you can tell him about our poor boy. I shall soon be back. Wait here, sir, till I come."

Now Leila had heard through the half-closed door "Mr. Gerald Arlington" announced by the clerk in the other room, and though but few words of the subsequent conversation reached her, she was aware that her father was giving him a kindly greeting, and then was mentioning her own name.

What followed was the natural result of Harry Fortescue's conduct, combined with the dreary wretchedness caused by her brother's vices and subsequent sufferings, during which the remembrance of Gerald Arlington's talks with her, and latterly, above all, that letter of Gerald's to Harry had been the one bright spot in her life. Now on the morning of the day on which they thus strangely met, at her vehement request she had been allowed to go with her mother to see the poor sufferer, and then she had heard him speak of Gerald as her father described. It was, of course, a very trying interview, although a perfectly lucid interval for Alfred, and yet there was something unspeakably comforting to his sister in finding how he answered, out of his settled gloom, her brief references to religious truth in a way that he had never done when in health. Since leaving him, she had been longing so deeply to tell Gerald all this, and wondering whether he would go and see her brother and help to restore him. And then there *would* keep mingling with those thoughts a shy, forbidden, yet passionate longing which had haunted her lately to let Gerald know she could never be the wife of his friend. Yes, even to confess to him all she herself had long felt for him—to tell him he had not cared for her or kissed her flowers in vain—in short, to reward him for his generous self-sacrifice, and to rest amid all the sorrows that oppressed her on his unstained and loving heart. All that had passed since he left his home had only tended to make his character nobler and dearer in her eyes, and since reading his letter to Harry, she felt, with her usual enthusiasm, that her true life henceforth was bound up with his for ever.

And then the thought of the possibility that, before hearing of Mrs. Arlington's death, Ellen Fortescue might have written to Gerald, as she had said she should, telling him Leila had seen his letter to Harry, had finally and irrevocably refused her brother, and had confessed her attachment to Gerald,—in spite of all her efforts after becoming maidenly indifference, made her heart beat quickly, and sent the blushes to her cheek, as the young gentleman opened the door.

So with matters in this state Gerald was introduced by Mr. Featherstone to his daughter, where she sat in that large dingy city parlour "making a sunshine in a shady place," and as the door opened she rose to meet him. Her slender yet exquisitely moulded figure stood framed, as it were, before him in the surrounding gloom—a vision of light bright muslin drapery, some of it floating round her, some closely engirdling her—a dainty little bonnet or hat on her head, pink ribands also floating about somewhere, one little foot advanced, one hand shyly held out, her hair just shading the delicate face on which a faint blush was visible, with her dark eyes just flashing at him beneath their lids—the thoughts that had been passing through her mind giving an indescribable fascination to her manner, usually so cold and sometimes repellent. There she stood, a very lovely, and to Gerald a dazzling vision. For an instant he felt confused, passed his hand across his eyes, then recovered himself by a great effort and came forward. They shook hands, and in one brief second Leila felt that his love was not for her; his manner was cool and unexcited. His voice, inquiries, all manifested simply a gentlemanly, respectful interest, and the poor little fluttering heart sank down in her bosom once more, crushed down rather into quiet, patient disappointment; for Gerald had had just time enough to throw on his armour of knightly faith and heroism, and came into her presence cased in triple steel. Fortunately for her (as she then thought), having heard his name, she also had had time to make some preparation, by vehemently repeating to herself at intervals that since he wrote that letter to Harry he must have given up all idea of cherishing his own affection for her—that he was too true a friend, too noble, to seek his own happiness at that friend's expense. Besides, she knew that Miss Fortescue had probably never written to him. Harry would not have spoken to him on account of his mother's illness and death, and she knew enough of Gerald to feel sure that, having once given up all thought of her for his friend's sake, he would make the sacrifice complete while he thought a chance remained for that friend. Then, again, she thought that Gerald might have since met with someone to whom he had given that love which would otherwise have been her own. Hence she also soon contrived to check the agitation she felt. And so they sat and talked quietly a little about the weather, and then Leila gently and tenderly expressed a few words of sympathy with Gerald on the melancholy loss he had sustained. And then they talked a little about her brother, but in a constrained way, and a little about Mrs. Featherstone; then a little about Adelaide and Richard Arlington, and the state

of the times generally, and a few other slow topics, but it was all a great effort. Her manner became increasingly cold and disdainful—his correspondingly indifferent. They were in a strange position; but it was one that has been occupied by hundreds before them, and has then been followed by life-long estrangement and sorrow; sometimes, however, by blissful explanations and a delightful wedding, with possibly four horses and white cockades.

At length Gerald could bear it no longer, and rose, making some excuse about going to see if Mr. Featherstone had returned. If Harry had but asked his sister whether there was hope for his friend, though not for himself, and had told Gerald what Ellen would then have told him—but he had not. So Gerald rose to go. He did not venture to look at Leila's pale face as he quietly shook hands, but she could not help seeing the strange and rigid expression of *his* countenance (as he tried to maintain an indifferent air), and the deadly paleness that overspread it. She had seen great anguish before then. She felt almost sure she saw greater at that moment. "Does he then indeed love me?" asked her heart. She knew then she loved him. She would have given worlds at that moment—she would have given the happiness of her whole life to secure his. Why then should she be silent? Might not a single word break down this horrible partition wall between them? And what if he did not really love her? Could she not bear the burden even of being repulsed—of having spoken that word in vain—for the *chance* of making him happy? Swift as lightning these thoughts flashed through her mind. He had opened the door to go. With a great effort—Heaven only knows the struggle it cost her—she whispered half aloud, "Gerald," and the word came forth softly and so plaintively—with such a wealth of yearning maidenly love in it, yet so piteously . . . and her eyes filling with tears were following him with a strange pleading tenderness. If he could but have seen them. And, if he would but only turn he could not help seeing them, even though he might not hear her voice . . . And Mr. Featherstone, would he not, for his wife's and daughter's sake, have done as much for Gerald Arlington as he had promised Mrs. Featherstone he would do for Harry Fortescue? All this would have made them both very happy no doubt. But supposing Providence had something better to offer these two loving children of His than mere enjoyment? Perhaps their own faults or the sins of others made such great happiness impossible for them then. At all events, that precious opportunity (as it may seem to mortal vision) passed away unused. Gerald heard her not. Yet Leila spoke loud enough for him to hear under

ordinary circumstances. But there is a curious fact worth noticing. Words spoken as you are leaving a room often fail to reach your ear, because evidently the draft of air rushing in, as you draw the door after you, wafts them away from your ear back to the speaker; besides, the open door let in the noise of the ceaseless mighty traffic in the distant thoroughfares. So he never heard her, and passed on, unconscious. And she, not considering the above fact, almost thought he *must* have heard, and did not care to stay. Most miserable thought of all for that true maiden heart; and yet she had felt so sure he still loved her. But after awhile she was willing to bear even this *for him*.

Mr. Featherstone returned as Gerald was inquiring for him in the counting-house. The latter then received his instructions, bowed, and passed out.

Leila could not conceal from her mother, as they rode home in the carriage to Wimbledon, that something had greatly agitated her in London. Their common grief in consequence of Alfred's disease had broken down barriers of stately reserve, and had drawn mother and daughter together in a tender mutual confidence they had never known before. Mrs. Featherstone had been told of the encounter with Mr. Fortescue at the theatre, and had quite approved her daughter's decision. She had also seen Gerald's letter to Harry; and therefore, when Leila tried in a few broken words to explain matters and couldn't do it, the motherly heart understood it all, and determined to comfort her daughter by begging her husband to take young Mr. Arlington to his paternal heart, instead of Harry Fortescue, as a son-in-law, if he really desired that honour, for he "was a very remarkable high-principled young man," she observed, "and the family connection was as good in the one case as the other, and he had been very good to our poor boy. And then you know, my dear," she continued, addressing her husband, "as he has been brought up to business you can take him at once into your house and make him a partner by-and-bye. He will take the place of our poor dear Alfred." Mr. Featherstone was touched by the tears gathering in the eyes of his usually self-contained and rather frigid spouse, and cordially expressed approval of her idea on the whole, only observing, rather sarcastically, that the young gentleman had not hitherto shown any great fondness for business, and that he feared a partnership in his own firm was still a considerable way off. "But then," he added, kindly, "but then, no doubt, he's a very agreeable, gentlemanly young fellow, and listens with great respect to an old man's views on government and trade, which is not so usual as formerly; and, as you say, he did his best

for our unhappy son ; and if you really think, my love, he'd make our little darling happy, I'm sure I'll do what I can for him. There now, cheer up. I will indeed, my dear—that is, you know, if Arlington doesn't want him in his own business. But between ourselves that's not likely. I'm afraid my poor friend's concern there in Fenchurch Street is rather shaky, and the times are dreadful, and when I'm well out of this tallow speculation which he drew me into, unfortunately, I hope he'll wind up and attend only to his great companies. He has good brains, but they are not enough for all things under the sun."

CHAPTER III.

NOT long after the events recorded in the last chapter, Miss Tylney and her nephew were sitting in the dining-room at Hartland House, luncheon being just concluded, when the post arrived. Gerald was lost in dreary contemplation, gazing rather dismally into space, till the letter which the footman handed to him roused him into considerable though temporary excitement. It was a kind note from Mrs. Featherstone, asking him if he would mind going to see her son the following day, and would afterwards come down with Mr. Featherstone in his carriage to Wimbledon, where they should be glad if he would spend a day or two. When his aunt had finished reading her own letters, Gerald handed her this one, saying, in a weary, sorrowful way, "I was intending to go soon to see poor Featherstone, and I'll write to the old lady all about it. But go to Wimbledon? No, certainly not." Miss Tylney glanced at him quietly, and with a slight exclamation handed him one of the letters *she* had just read. It ran thus:—

[LEILA FEATHERSTONE TO MISS FORTESCUE.]

"Wimbledon, /37.

"Dearest Ellen,—You ask me to put in writing what I said to you the other day, because you cannot bear to tell your brother merely your own recollections of our talk. You say he may think *you* have mistaken me. Yet you trust me wholly. I thank you very sincerely for your confidence in me, dearest. I thank your brother also, more than I need describe, for the affection he has felt for me, and the hand he offered me. I will endeavour to merit your trust and his regard by speaking frankly and decisively. Mr. Fortescue's

wife I can never be, even if in consequence we both go unmarried to our graves. I said so before, and *meant* it. But I regard him still too much not to add what it may at first seem strange that I should write, but which I know him at least well enough to believe he will on reflection think I am right to tell him. Your brother has said that he thinks me different from most of my sex. That may be a doubtful compliment; but at all events he will pardon me, whether he agrees with me or not, for speaking to him, both formerly and now, as women seldom do, or dare to do; but as it would be well perhaps for his sex if they oftener did, and as the noblest and holiest of ours have often longed for the opportunity of speaking. Tell Mr. Fortescue, then, I believe that God meant men to be as chaste and pure as they think women ought to be. And let me pray you to ask him whether he would have married *me* had I been degrading myself as he has done. Tell him I believe that unchastity must be as dark a sin in men as it is in us; and that it does make a subsequent marriage so far—so far—unblessed of God—brings, according to circumstances, more or less of His displeasure on that marriage. I quite admit that there are many other grievous sins which bring a blight on wedded love—that women may sin in their way, and according to their temptations, as darkly as men, whether in point of temper or vanity, worldliness or selfishness, or any other form of idolatry; and that God does not command marriage to cease until all men and women are perfect. But I cannot myself look on marriage with a man who has sinned frequently—for a time habitually—as your brother has done, and as I fear many men do, without a feeling of loathing and shame. If our divine Lord meant anything by what He said on this subject, He meant something very awful; and while absolutely disclaiming all judgment of the conduct of others, I dare not myself accept the offer Mr. Fortescue has made me, nor vows of one who has sinned so deeply, however deeply he may have repented. Many would condemn me for even speaking and writing on such subjects, much more for refusing him; and call my behaviour by very hard names. Mr. Fortescue I do not think will. But I can bear it all, and much more, if it be God's will, and He gives the strength. I can live without the love of man or the blessedness of married life; but I cannot live without God's love, nor my own self-respect. Let me add, I could have no happiness, no peace in marriage, without the fullest, truest respect for my husband. I would *rather* he were above myself in intellect and power, but he *must* be at least my equal in moral principle and purity of heart and life. If I have spoken presumptuously, forgive me; and believe that I shall never cease to

desire your brother's regard and esteem, nor to pray for his highest welfare, both here and in that higher world, where I humbly hope we may one day find all our sins forgiven, and that then we may meet in joy. I do in my heart believe he has yet a noble future before him on earth, and that God will help him to make his life useful to others, and a fitting preparation for the higher life in Heaven. May He grant this for His dear Son's sake.

"Ever your grateful, loving little friend,
"L. F."

As Gerald laid down this letter he said, with a great sigh, "A true woman—worthy of the noblest man. . . . Poor, poor Harry."

"Yes," answered Miss Tylney, with an attempt at a smile, "worthy of the noblest—Heaven reward her!—but may not even one so unworthy as yourself *now* try to make her happy?"

"No," replied Gerald, speaking slowly and with great effort, as he rose from his seat, "I have given Fortescue, more than once, a solemn promise I never would try to win her from him—and I don't think he'll ever release me from that promise, nor ought I to wish or expect it. You don't know how he has loved her—no wonder—and perhaps some day she may repent of having utterly and for ever refused him. We can't tell. He and I have been true friends to each other, aunt. I have no right to take advantage of his fall. God help us both," and he sat down again, shading his face with his hands.

Miss Tylney looked greatly distressed, and restlessly fingered another letter in her hands. Suddenly she exclaimed, "Stay! what is this?" as she stooped to pick up something under the table. "Harry's handwriting, I'm sure. It must have fallen out of Nelly's letter." It was addressed to Gerald.

[HARRY FORTESCUE TO GERALD ARLINGTON.]

"Your long and generous sacrifice is over, Gerald. Distinctly understand I release you from all your vows. Understand, in fact, two things: First, I *know* now that the girl we have both loved will never marry me. I haven't a chance—and no right to think of her again if I had. Second, that *you* have a chance, and deserve it. Nelly should have spoken more plainly to me before—but it was my fault she didn't. Oh, Gerry, boy! I've treated you shamefully. But I was beside myself—that's the long and the short of it. But it's all over now; and I should never have known your value if I hadn't behaved so badly myself. Yet, believe me, if I had known earlier that she really cared for you I wouldn't have—well, I don't know. She drove me frantic. Thank God, I believe I am in my

right senses now; though that's not saying much. However, to come to the point. You are to have no doubts now about what you're to do. Remember you told me once that if ever you found (what you thought absurdly improbable) that you had won Leila Featherstone's heart it would alter all your relations in that matter to me, and that though you were right to give up your own happiness, you would have no right to sacrifice hers, even for my sake. Certainly not. The lady has a right to choose between us, and sad though her mistake may be, behold, she *has* chosen, and you must submit. If you doubt, go over to Wimbledon and get leave to ask her. Nelly knows the truth. Good-bye, old fellow. If I remembered how to pray properly I *should* pray, and pretty fervently, that you and she might be happy together for ever and a day. I *do* hope it. So go a-head, my Gerry, and may God bless you both, as you surely deserve. You've been a true friend, and He *will* reward you. She deserves the best mate He can give her—and she'll have it. In no other mortal man's favour, for no one less worthy than you, could I give up all hope. Fare you weel, my canty callant—I'm off to Edinburgh in a day or two and must air my Scotch a bit. Don't write.

“*Ever* yours,

“H. F.”

When Gerald had glanced through this note he merely said, “Ah, he's a grand fellow! Heaven bless him!” and then came back the old weary look, as he gave it to his aunt.

“Well,” said she, rather sadly, when she had read it, and with as much tartness as her sweet nature allowed, “what are you thinking about? Nothing seems to please you. I don't believe you care much about our darling after all.”

“Aunt Caroline!” exclaimed the young man, as he sprang impetuously to his feet, “you don't know what you are saying! Take care. I love that girl as I could almost think no man or woman ever loved before. But what evidence is there that Harry's most improbable notion isn't all moonshine? I reverence her almost as deeply as I love her, and I would rather go through life worshipping her afar off than utter a word more that could lead her to marry me, unless I knew she loved me as I love her. And what sign is there that she cares a brass button for me, or ever will! Why the very last time I saw her, when our great sorrow was fresh upon me, and when if ever a woman might show sympathy, she was as cool as a cucumber, and as haughty as old Queen Bess!”

“Eh! indeed,” replied Miss Tylney, whose face had been brightening out of its sadness during this impassioned harangue.

"Then if that were so, like the great queen, I should say, Gerry, she deserves to die unwed; but I don't think she will. Really, you are extremely foolish, Gerald. Pray let me ask how did *your* haughtiness condescend to treat her ladyship on that occasion? Did you show, then, such very ardent affection——"

Gerald started, and catching his aunt's hand looked into her face with intense searching inquiry. "No," he said, drawing a deep breath.

"Then, oh! thou troublesome specimen of male incredulity and delicate, most chivalrous gallantry, and extremely provoking pride and absurdity, how could she, especially such a she, behave otherwise?" responded the aunt, withdrawing her hand and giving him the letter which she had all this time been clutching nervously. "If all you want is satisfaction about her views in general, you may read that." Then she leaned back in her chair with an air of supreme contentment at last, while a sort of beatific, half playful smile stole over her features. Gerald seized the letter, for he knew well the symmetrical handwriting, and read with beating heart Leila's letter to Miss Tylney, in which, among other inflammatory matter, were these words—

". When I read that letter, dear Miss Tylney, of Mr. Gerald Arlington's to his friend, in which you know he admitted he had so long cared for me, the strange, wild joy that came over me told me a secret I had but partly known—told me how deeply, though unconsciously, *I* had cared for *him*, even when I knew comparatively little of his feelings about me. I do believe he has felt *some* interest, some attachment for me; or did once, when I could not return it; when, indeed, my heart seemed divided, and I could not have given him or anyone such entire affection as—— But that is over now—very sadly ended—but still ended. And was it not a noble thing of Mr. Fortescue to send me his friend's letter? I was not wrong in my admiration for what that man was once, and might have been, may be—yes, hereafter *will* be. But, oh! dear Miss Tylney, my heart's rest was not, never could have been with him. * * * * * Well, dearest lady—if—if you should ever *know* that Gerald Arlington loves me as I feel I could, as I *do*, love him (I may confess this for the first, last time, to you, for to you I know it will be sacred), then some distant day, perhaps, you may let him guess what I But, oh, remember, he may have long since ceased to think about me and have looked elsewhere for the love he could not, would not, ask of me—another may have won the rich treasure of his own. If so, I charge you, Miss Tylney, by all your respect for

woman's honour, that you burn this letter instantly, and never breathe the faintest syllable of what it contains.

“Thine ever, trustfully, lovingly,

“L. F.”

Gerald thrust this letter into his bosom, gave his aunt one prodigious kiss, adjured her to write to Leila on the spot, and then rushed out of the room. He did not, however, have his horse immediately saddled and gallop furiously off to Wimbledon. This was his first impulse, no doubt, and almost an ungovernable one; but after a few minutes spent in his own room in an irrepressible thanksgiving prayer, and writing a few ardent words to Leila, and a hurried, grateful acceptance to Mrs. Featherstone of the invitation to Wimbledon, he did send off the stable-boy at a rattling pace on another steed with these two precious documents, and one equally valuable from Miss Tylney to her young friend, the last containing a remarkably graphic, though brief description of what had just taken place. Then he mounted his own little nag, and galloped up to the old breezy common and woodland glades, where he had so often revelled in boyish happiness or fought out his mortal conflicts, in later days.

It was a lovely afternoon in Epping Forest and at High Beech that day. Never had their sunny glades and grassy slopes and magnificent beech trees looked more lovely; and the young leaves were just budding; the birds were warbling, as if they were all in love; and such a sense of blessedness as he had never thought it possible he could feel and live, lifted up Gerald's heart to Heaven. Hour after hour sped on. Still he was riding, or sitting, reading over and over Leila's letter; gazing, dreaming, or walking about in ecstasy, with the bridle over his arm; or running and leaping like a madman, leaving his astonished steed tied to a tree. Could but his mother have shared his happiness—and if Harry could but be as happy too. These were the only thoughts that dashed his joy. But he called to that dear mother in Heaven, and felt she must hear him, and know of his happiness. And he saw a far-off vision of happiness for Harry also in the distant future's golden haze.

It may doubtless be an unquestionable fact that “the course of true love never did run smooth” (otherwise, say some, it would never be *true* love). But there certainly are seasons in all such wooings when joy comes, greater than the heart before had dreamed of, sometimes greater than it seems able to bear. Such a season had come at last to Gerald Arlington, wandering among the beech trees and the ferns in the forest; and at last to Leila Featherstone also, later in the day, when Gerald's breathless messenger arrived.

with his and Miss Tylney's notes, and when she wandered out among the furze bushes, miles away from Gerald, in the south there, on Wimbledon Common. For then Leila knew her feminine insight had not misled her, and that she was loved as deeply as her woman's heart might desire. And then at last came that inevitable sunset, which probably does always come in this world alike to our joys and sorrows, especially in tales; and it came so bright and peaceful that evening, with a rich, crimson glow, and the dark masses of foliage on the edge of the forest standing out clear and marked against the tinted sky. Long the young man stood gazing there, and thinking of *the morrow*—thinking how that glorious sunset was the pledge of a brighter day to come—thinking where he should be, what he might be saying, whom he might be with that time the following day.

When Leila Featherstone heard her father tell her mother to write to young Mr. Arlington and ask him to come to Wimbledon, she thought far more was meant, poor child, than really was or could be. Vague, tumultuous thoughts and dreams, indignant pride, and tenderest fancies, had come surging up, chasing each other like waves of the sea. At first, after that meeting in Broad Street, she had brooded over it, sometimes in proud bitterness of soul, but ere long often in deepest, humblest tenderness and grief. But she had striven and prayed with indomitable faith to be able to "possess her soul in patience," and to "wait on the Lord," conquering the wild impulses of anger, passion, and pride, that agitated her. Hence for her, too, at last had come that brief, bright hour of unutterable joy as she read her lover's note and Miss Tylney's letter, and heard that he was coming to her home. Yes, there was joy enough in that little heart on Wimbledon Common that afternoon, not much greater joy, perhaps, in any heart elsewhere on God's earth, except in her lover's.

* * * * *

As Gerald rode slowly home that evening he little thought it was the last ride on horseback he should ever have out of Hartland House gates, but he came home in a mood that rose above all outward chances. Since she loved him, why he would soon wring from the tough world a right to claim his beloved. He would grapple with the work by which in one form or other men do build up homes for wife and child—grapple with it here or there with the energy and the faith that overcome the world, and be able thereby also to work all the better for humanity.

* * * * *

Harry remained three or four days longer at Neville Court after

writing to Gerald, chiefly occupied in what he called gardening (but which chiefly consisted in cutting and slashing away at the too luxuriant growth of the shrubberies) and long walks, and then went off to Edinburgh, where a medical chum had invited him to witness a remarkable operation about to be performed at the infirmary. He spoke very little to his sister while with her, and "consumed his own smoke;" but his manner was more than usually considerate and gentle, and in spite of the acute suffering she knew he was enduring she was more hopeful concerning him than she had been for many a day. Some change had come over him, though she knew not exactly what, and yet she thought it was not altogether the change she wanted in him and prayed for.

CHAPTER IV.

AT Hartland House during breakfast the next day Mr. Arlington seemed oppressed with thoughts which were overwhelming him all the more through a reaction from the intense strain he had been for weeks placing upon himself. The securities he had relied on up to the last moment seemed likely to prove utterly inadequate, being depreciated considerably in value. He had come home very late the night before and soon retired to his room. His compressed lips and forehead contracted with a painful frown, as they met round the breakfast table, told a melancholy tale. His sister-in-law glanced at him with timid apprehension, and felt it would be better to say nothing to him about Gerald's happiness or the invitation to Wimbledon, and contrived to find out that her nephew agreed with her. Gerald, while longing to share his father's load, knew he had cut himself off from that privilege by leaving business, and could only show his filial sympathy by slight attentions and one or two useless attempts to promote conversation. But though grieving over his father's troubles, and half fearing that things might have been getting worse in the City, there was one bright, intoxicating thought which whenever it recurred to him made his heart bound with exulting joy, though dashed with sympathetic sorrow for his poor friend as well as for his anxious father.

Father and son left Hartland House in the phaeton, the father going straight to his counting-house to find his last hopes of

averting the crash destroyed; the son getting down at the road leading to the private asylum, where Alfred was confined. The interview he had there was depressing; but he believed, as he turned towards the City, that he had been of some little use, for Alfred had been unfeignedly glad to see him, and manifestly cheered by the visit. He found Fortescue had been once, but the effect had been bad, and he was not to go again. And then the hope before him, and another bright hope, that he might perhaps in time help to restore the brother of his beloved to sanity—with the natural buoyancy of youth sent him in comparatively high spirits towards Mr. Featherstone's counting-house about four o'clock, whence he was to accompany that gentleman to Wimbledon.

But suddenly it flashed on him that there was one trying scene to be gone through—perhaps a terrible ordeal—after all he might find total shipwreck there. He had begun to consider whether he ought not to speak out frankly to Mr. Featherstone before he went down to Wimbledon, feeling he had no right to take advantage of his hospitality to ask the daughter to accept him until he had got the father's consent; and naturally he felt no little apprehension at the idea of speaking to the irritable old gentleman. Might he not, without a breach of honour, privately tell Leila his love for her, and make her feel they understood one another, though he could not think, of course, of proposing a regular engagement till he had some prospect of earning his livelihood, and being able one day to marry? But no, his conscience wasn't satisfied, and he resolved to speak. He would take care to say that he did not ask for an engagement, only that he loved, and had no reason to believe he was not indifferent to, Miss Featherstone.

So thinking, he arrived at the Broad Street counting-house, and hoped he should be shown into a certain beatific back-parlour; but instead he was ushered at once into the old gentleman's sanctum by one of the clerks; not without marks of evident surprise both on his own and his fellow-clerk's faces. Mr. Featherstone was sitting in a brown study when Gerald entered. He started up as soon as he heard the name. The clerk hastily closed the door, and there they stood, the old man and the young one, staring at each other.

"You named four o'clock, Mr. Featherstone," said Gerald, rather aghast, and by way of explanation, "for me to be here and accompany you to Wimbledon." But Gerald saw that Mr. Featherstone glanced at him for a moment with a look of furious indignation; then his eye sank before the frank, fearless look of innocent surprise on Gerald's face. He took a step or two, looked again at Gerald, and said—

"I little expected to see you, sir, under the circumstances. Haven't you seen your father to-day?"

"Not since we parted on our way to town."

"Look there, sir," and Mr. Featherstone handed Gerald a note written by his father that morning in the usual official form.

"Messrs. Featherstone and Co. "—— Street, April, /37.

"Gentlemen,—We regret having to inform you that we are this day compelled to stop payment. As early a meeting of creditors as possible will be arranged.

Your obedient servants,

ARLINGTON & Co."

Mr. Featherstone showed Gerald this note, but he did not tell him of a private letter sent at the same time, explaining how up to the last moment the proud old merchant had expected to retrieve the fortunes of the day.

"There, sir, that's what your father has come to. And he hid it from me with the cunning of a ——. He has beggared himself, sir, and nearly ruined me. And you, sir, I understand from my wife—you have been tampering with the affections of my daughter, when you haven't a penny, sir—when you've never earned one and never will—and now your father's—a bankrupt beggar!" cried the old man, getting more and more excited. "Whatever we may have owed you for the past is utterly cancelled, sir. You have behaved disgracefully, young mn, and I'll thank you to leave this place, and never come near me or mine again."

"Mr. Featherstone, suffer me to say you are mistaken."

"Mistaken, sir!" exclaimed the choleric old man——

"Yes, Mr. Featherstone; my father is not cunning, and I have not been tampering with your daughter's affections. Hear me one moment. I have a right to speak. You are a gentleman, so am I. Then bear with me a few seconds. Before coming here I had resolved to tell you, Mr. Featherstone" (was he not thankful that he had so resolved?) "that I had long loved your daughter and would therefore not go down with you to Wimbledon unless, knowing this, you permitted me to go. But I have never spoken to her on the subject of my attachment—never even hinted to her what I felt. I had no intention of asking Miss Featherstone's or your consent to an engagement until I had a fair prospect of being able to support her."

"If this were your intention, sir, *you* meant to act honourably at all events, and it's more than I might have expected of you," returned Mr. Featherstone, slightly mollified. "But then how came my daughter—how came she, sir," his suspicions and wrath

coming back with gradually increasing vehemence, "to know of your feelings towards her? It looks very strange; and what proof have I of all this? How do I know you are not deceiving me as your father did?"

"Mr. Featherstone!"

"Well, well, well, it may be all very true, or it may have been thought of after—at all events, I have no wish to see you or any of your name, sir, again. Mind me; I've cause enough to wish I had never seen one of you. You'll please to understand me. Never come near me or mine again. Yesterday I was a wealthy man, and could hold up my head with the proudest in the city, sir. To-day!—And that man, sir, whom you in total ignorance of his disgraceful conduct are defending, has done it. He has swindled me out of £60,000! besides——

"It's false!" broke in Gerald with towering wrath.

"False!" echoed Mr. Featherstone, and he rang the bell furiously, "do you dare call me a liar to my face?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Gerald, for his blood, too, was up, and as a clerk hurried in and he stalked out, he turned and added, "Yes, that is my last word to you, sir, till you retract that lie!" But the old gentleman was livid with rage and the door banged upon him. He found himself in Broad Street, in a thick London fog, scarcely knowing whether he was on the solid earth or in some abode of the damned.

The shock of that interview was lasting. How he got through the rest of the day he couldn't tell. He remembered going mechanically to his father's counting-house and being roused temporarily by the sight of the old man's wretchedness, which he was trying to conceal under a sort of Spartan cheerfulness; and then there was the dreary drive home in the dark, and the silent dinner. How different an evening from what he had looked forward to!

But at length came a ray of comfort to him in Miss Tylney's loving, compassionate sympathy. Indescribably precious both to father and son was her presence, and the soothing, elevating consolation she knew so well how to give. By degrees Mr. Arlington explained the nature and extent of his misfortunes; but it was not till some days afterwards that, deeply touched by the account he gradually heard from Miss Tylney of poor Gerald's disappointment, and Mr. Featherstone's behaviour, he explained the relation of his own failure to the losses sustained by his unfortunate friend, and showed him various letters and documents which, when the proper time came, would fully exculpate him from the charge of dishonourable conduct.

Of course it was a great relief to his son to find how thoroughly his confidence in his father was justified.

"But then, father," said Gerald, "can you not clear your character at once—at least, to Mr. Featherstone?"

"He will not see me, my boy, nor read any letters from me. God forgive him! for he's dealing very hardly—most unjustifiably, both with me and my character. But it can't be helped. It will all come out before the Commissioner. Nothing I can say or do will have much effect till then, because the evidence must all be fully gone into. I must wait, Gerald, and you too. Don't fret about it, my boy. It will all be right before long. We must wait. I have a few friends left, and they'll do their best for me. The rest we must leave. I'm glad she didn't live to see this."

The consciousness that his conduct was being represented in a dishonourable light, however, was just simply and literally heart-breaking to the proud, "just man" who had so long "walked in his integrity." He showed little of what he felt, except in the pallor of his countenance and the laboured effort with which he attended to his duties. There was nothing for him to fall back upon, for the wreck was so complete that he had to give up all his appointments—even the chairmanship of his beloved Railway and Atlantic Steam Navigation Companies. Not a share in one of his companies but must go into the market. Gerald would have given much to be able to help his father now, but he found it was out of the question. And so he worked away as well as he could at his serial "tale" and his "cyclopædia" articles, and his studies in political economy, rhetoric, &c. But the zest and glory of the work was gone. A heavy cloud settled down upon him. His favourite little chesnut, of course, had gone with the rest of the stud to Tattersall's.

Meantime, the bankruptcy affairs dragged heavily on. One day Gerald, accidentally meeting Ned Grant, who was full of kind and awkward sympathy, heard from that omniscient young gentleman that Mr. Featherstone was winding up his business in Broad Street—had already sold his house at Wimbledon, let the mansion in Portland Place, and was shortly going with his wife and daughter to reside abroad. "It's something like a smash with him, I hear, as well as with your governor."

"When do they leave Wimbledon?" asked Gerald.

"To-morrow, I believe, or next day," was the answer. "There's going to be a shooting-match, I hear, on the Common in consequence. Half-a-score of Miss Featherstone's admirers meet by appointment, to *exploiter* themselves. But now, tell me, Gerry,"

continued Ned, confidentially, "can I help in getting you a berth anywhere? That is, if you're thinking of our line. I won't say anything of our own shop, you know, for we're chock full; besides, *my* dad squeaks by your dad's downfall, to the tune of £3000 or £4000. But, you know we're old friends, and I'll exert all my influence elsewhere."

"Thank'ee, Ned. You're a trump, I know, in your way—which was always first-rate. If I should want your help, trust me, I'll look you up, and thank you heartily. Good-bye."

That morning his aunt had given Gerald a letter which she had just received from Miss Featherstone. It was in answer to one Aunt Carry had written about a week before at Gerald's passionate entreaty, and ran thus, with the mark of tears upon its wavering lines:—

"Wimbledon, March /37.

"Dear Miss Tylney,—Many, many thanks for yours. You do not know, you never can know, how welcome it was to me. I should have written long before but was forbidden to write either to you or Miss Fortescue, and when I got leave it was only on condition of showing my letter. But I *could not* write so. And I waited. But now it is settled we are to start for Brussels the day after to-morrow, and I may write these few last words unread at home. Dearest Miss Tylney, many blessings on you, and on those you love, for all you tell me. But it is not to be. I never would marry without my father's consent, still less against his solemn command, and even if I survived him, which is not likely—he has said that if I married his greatest enemy's son, even after his death—oh, it is too dreadful to repeat! Then he says that Gerald Arlington grossly insulted him. I think there may—must have been some great provocation, or some terrible mistake, but I cannot bear to think of all my poor father has suffered from these and other things, and I do fear that he has been greatly sinned against, however unintentionally, both by Mr. Arlington and his son. Under all these circumstances, how can there be room in my heart now for such feelings as you refer to—even with regard to a distant future? No, no, no! That is past. I never, never could make your nephew happy after what has happened. But tell him, dear Miss Tylney, tell him how much I have enjoyed his acquaintance, how very thankful I feel to him for all the benefit and happiness he has given me—for all he has done for my poor brother—and, most of all, for having cared for me so much as to wish to make me, one day, his wife. But that is all past. It would be sinful even to think of, much more to cherish such feelings now. He will find

some one by-and-bye, I trust, to give him a home of peace and joy even on earth, and if we both work on in faith and holiness there is no sin in looking forward to meeting in one home in heaven. You know how often I have thought, both before and especially since my poor brother's illness, that my vocation was not to marriage, but to the life of those noble and blessed 'Sisters of Mercy,' of whom we have often talked and read; and I hope while abroad to learn to live that life, so that if ever we come back to dear, dear England, I may be able to heal some wounds and comfort some sorrowful souls there with Divine help. I cannot help still clinging to hope for my brother's restoration—but I am told not to hope; that it is now certain he cannot recover, and that mamma and I must never see him. But God is still Love.

"Oh, Miss Tylney, I could write on and on—I cannot bear finishing this scrawl. It seems like the last word I may ever—. Farewell, dear, dear friend. You must not write to me again—nor I to you—nor may I to darling Ellen even, at present; which seems so hard—but you will explain all to her. And our heavenly Father's love will support, guide, and comfort us *all*.

"Yours in grateful love,

"L. F."

That this letter was read and re-read, and kept till it was worn to tatters, and many a burning kiss pressed upon it, can be easily believed. When Gerald first read it, and then found that the family were off to the Continent the next day, vague and frantic fancies seized him of immediately proceeding to Wimbledon, of lying-in-wait near the house, of watching an opportunity of speaking to the writer for the last time, of clasping her to his heart once—once for all—and then tearing himself away for ever. He did go to Wimbledon that evening, and remained within sight of the house, though hidden by the trees, till nearly midnight; but he did not yield to the passionate madness which impelled him to gain an interview with his beloved at all risks, and in defiance of all his principles. So the night wore on. When he had become thoroughly exhausted with his vigils, Gerald walked dolefully back to the inn at Putney, where, six years before, he had first seen Leila Featherstone—went up to his room and tried to sleep, with only partial success. Yet the night passed and the dawn came at last, as we may generally reckon upon their doing, morally as well as physically, and both according to previous arrangement.

CHAPTER V.

THE winding-up of Mr. Arlington's affairs was a weary, dreary process, dragging itself along week after week. The expressions of sympathy, respect, and regret, which reached him at first from all quarters—from the public press as well as from commercial acquaintances, from Lords of the Admiralty, members of the Board of Trade, brother directors, and many private friends—were a considerable solace in the early days of his misfortunes to the aspiring, public-spirited old man. But all these, of course, came to an end; and then, instead of the exciting enterprises which had formerly occupied his interest, to the too great neglect, perhaps, of his own business, but which he had been carrying forward to success with such magnificent energy, disinterestedness, and tact; all the wretched and complicated details of disasters, mistakes, blunders, and defeat in his own affairs had to be dwelt upon and unravelled day after day till even *his* strong tough mind seemed breaking down under the accumulated load of suffering.

He would, however, doubtless have struggled through and come out of the fiery baptism, purified and ennobled, more fit for the final change, which is often nearer than we dream of, had it not been for the fatal reports alluded to above, which were soon in circulation as to his supposed dishonourable treatment of Mr. Featherstone. That gentleman was not one to exercise a magnanimous reticence, nor even an equitable patience, under his great provocations. Without seeking—nay, without receiving explanations—or even waiting till a full and fair investigation of all the circumstances could be made, he gave full swing to his resentment, and many City shoulders consequently began to be shrugged in compassionate pity or indignant contempt when Arlington and Co.'s affairs were mentioned.

A useful and successful public man always makes many enemies, and generally in proportion to his usefulness and success. Some dislike him from envy and jealousy; some hate him for his removal of abuses or redress of wrongs in which they had a vested interest; some detest him for what seems to them his dangerous ambition or unjust behaviour. Many who are never actuated themselves by public spirit or disinterested benevolence believe he must be seeking selfish, perhaps even mischievous ends, by all his activity

and labours; most see his mistakes and failings (of which, of course, there are plenty) especially when these are carefully pointed out and duly exaggerated. Hence, a wise man has said, "As the good love thee, the bad will hate thee;" and again, "Who has no friend and no enemy is one of the vulgar, and without talents, powers, or energy." By nothing, probably, is the progress of the world more hindered than by the obstructions which jealousies and misunderstandings lay in the path of its wisest and noblest benefactors.

In Mr. Arlington's case, some of his least amiable characteristics aggravated the natural tendency to dislike and depreciate a man of so much energy and benevolent ambition. Hence, there were plenty of City men ready to take advantage of his downfall, and to enjoy casting doubts on his integrity, or broadly hinting dishonest proceedings.

This the proud, just man could not brook. Miss Tylney and Gerald watched him anxiously from day to day—tried in vain to get him to have medical advice.

His eldest son, as before said, when he found he could be of no use in the counting-house toiled away at his literary work, but he longed vehemently to be able to help to bear his father's heavy burdens, and at last found he could. Nevertheless, day by day the bankrupt merchant's face grew paler and thinner, his brows more contracted, his lips more silent. Sometimes he appeared to be suffering acute bodily pain. Richard came down as usual once a week, and sometimes his father would seem for a time carried out of his gloomy thoughts by the young surgeon's stories of his hospital experience. The young fellow, though generally so reserved, exerted himself with genuine professional and filial interest to please his father, and naturally still seemed to him much improved. And so he certainly was in some respects; but, just as it used to be, he did not like being bored about his behaviour, either by Fortescue, his brother, or anyone else, so nobody knew much about his real character, but he had always held his father in more respect and regard than could have been supposed possible considering his real heart and life. Poor lad! he had somehow been unfortunate in his "bringing up," and under happier training might perhaps have made a fine character. The energy and fearless self-sacrifice with which he obeyed every professional call on him showed what might once have been made of him. "The parting of the ways," however, had long since been passed, and darkness had been chosen for light. Nevertheless, disliking the bother, as it had been said, of defending himself or of vexing his father, his conduct was outwardly decorous, and with his good abilities and tolerable industry he would have passed

muster among the most hopeful and respectable of medicals at St. ——— Hospital. He was much more gentlemanly than some of them, always willing to serve anybody if the cost was not too great. No blackguardism now was known, or at all events reported of Richard Arlington. True, he seldom denied himself any self-indulgence he could safely obtain; but not many persons knew that though abstaining from coarse, open vice, he sometimes went to work to gratify his tastes in a much quieter and more villainous way. So his father and Gerald were hopeful concerning him. His father considered things were working out well for his "medical boy" at last; and, on the whole, Gerald thought so too. Hence he was able to persuade himself he was free from the condemnation he had once feared might rest upon him for neglecting his younger brother; but he little knew the precious opportunity he had lost when he left his father's house. That Canadian voyage had made a complete break in the young rascal's life, and when he returned from it there was no doubt a chance of some permanent improvement in him. Whether Gerald could have really used it, Heaven only knows! Perhaps not. But it is more likely that he could. Opportunities of great usefulness to others, more precious than many dramas and all the nuggets in California, seem given to every one of us some time in our lives. This is certain, at all events, that whatever his opportunity *may* have been for saving his brother from the downward path, Gerald flung it away by leaving home, and in due time grievously repented thereof "with an exceeding great and bitter cry."

Mr. Arlington had migrated, with his books and papers, from the large, well-furnished apartments of his former tenancy in Fenchurch Street, to a small room, second floor, in Billiter Square. There Harry Fortescue, adventurously exploring one sultry morning some weeks after the expedition to Wimbledon Common, discovered his unhappy friend. There also, with his long legs balancing on the back of a chair, he sat for a full hour, listening to Gerald's explanations respecting the final break-up of the great houses of Messrs. Arlington and Featherstone, and to the still more interesting details of the way in which the catastrophe affected the friend of his youth, whom he found up to his elbows in ledgers and accounts. Fortescue had prolonged his stay in Edinburgh, taken a run up to the Highlands, and had only returned the night before, so that he had heard mere outlines of recent events, and now he came down upon Gerald with vehement, long pent-up sympathy and curiosity. At the end of Gerald's narration he drew a long deep breath, relieved himself by ejaculating

in a husky voice, with immense but repressed emotion, "By George!" took Gerald's hand with the tender, reverential compassion of a person about to comfort an orphan child by the side of his mother's grave, and then stormed up and down the room, finally subsiding into an arm-chair, with the well-worn, threadbare exhortation, "Never say die," pronounced in a tone so hopelessly dismal that Gerald almost forgot his own sorrow in an impulse to laugh at his dreary friend's consolation. Just then a heavy step was heard on the stairs.

"We can't have any more talk now, Harry. I think that's my father, and his solicitor will be here directly. What are you going to do? When and where can we meet?"

"I'm off at the end of the week, Gerry, like your favourite 'clothes professor,' again, with my '*pilger stab*' to the Tyrol, and then through Transylvania, I believe, and among the Vienna hospitals for the winter. It's bad for me, losing you—that's the last feather that breaks my back."

"Talk of back-breaking, Hal! why, your plan sounds like heaven," sighed Gerry, as he glanced round the room, "decidedly heaven—all but the hospitals."

"That's the only jolly part, my Gerry. As for heaven, you or Milton once informed me that the mind was its own place, and could make, &c. But, I say, come with me. Do-o-o-o. Do now. *Will* you come? I know you'll want all your money for your dad, but it won't cost you a farthing with me. We're old friends, and I've had something, after all, from my uncle's will."

Arlington smiled gratefully and gloomily, thanked him warmly by a look and a squeeze of his hand, and pointed to the door, at which Mr. Arlington was just entering. After a kindly greeting, given in the old hearty style (Harry was always a favourite with Mr. Arlington), but which could not prevent Fortescue being shocked by the old gentleman's altered appearance and expression, he took leave, saying to Gerald:

"Let us have the inevitable row, then, some day this week, to Richmond. I'll see when the tide serves and let you know. It will be our last for many a day." As indeed it was. The evening before Harry Fortescue started for the Continent he and Gerry, accordingly, once more rendezvoused at Searle's, and were soon gliding, as in days of old, with swift, strong stroke up the grand old stream. Abreast of the "Dog and Duck" they simultaneously rested on their oars, wiped their brows, and sank into pensive reflections.

"Well, it's a rum go," quoth Harry at last. (Pause.) "And I

thought you were all this time in the seventh heaven of reciprocated attachment and frantic affection, spite of financial bothers! Poor sinner!" He looked round; his great face beaming comical sympathetic regard and a sort of penitent humility. Then lowering himself backwards till his head almost rested on his friend's knee, he growled out, "I believe you've more need of the '*Pilger stab*' than I, my Gerry, after all. What *are* you doing in that dismal hole there up in Billiter Square?"

"Let's get to Richmond first," said Gerry, drawing a long breath, "and lick those coxsy fellows in that cutter, who seem to think they can teach us how to row."

Richmond Bridge was passed a boat's length ahead of the cutter, which bumptious craft looked amazed and disgusted that two should beat four—as well it might, for the crew were not young hands. Then, after awhile, the friends shipped their oars, and drifted in the slant rays of the declining sun, between the new-mown Twickenham meadows—drifted silently looking on into the west, just as of old, and thinking, doubtless, of the bygone time.

"Only six years, reflect upon it, Ulysses," quoth Gerald—"only six have passed since that memorable night when we sat and talked under those willow trees of all we were to do and to be, finishing by supping at the 'Dog and Duck,' Putney, in damp, though cheerful company."

Only six years, yet how much had passed—how much had blossomed and perished since then! Yet they had had a great deal to learn. Six years is not long to be at school, nor sixty.

"Well, Gerry, you seem to have something on your mind. Come 'drive dull care away.' You'll meet her again in a year or two—I don't mean dull Care—and it will be all right then, of course."

"You're a trump, King Hal! always were; but I wasn't thinking about that just then, but about what a confounded mess I've made of it ever since I left college. I tried the manager of —— Theatre the other day with that drama of mine, thinking it just possible I might get an honest penny by it, but he wouldn't look at it."

"Try the —— Theatre," said his friend.

"No go, Harry—no more good in a money point of view than all my studies in Quintilian & Co. are likely to be for regenerating the world! Fact is, all my work, everything I ever did, is all bosh, like my abortive little bit of existence."

"I won't believe it, Gerry. You and your work are to cut a figure yet, my boy."

"Don't talk in that way, you misguided impostor!" cried Gerald,

in as near an approach to wrath as he ever permitted himself to manifest. "I've done with such folly for ever! Don't you be tempting me back again. Thank God, my eyes are opened:

'I *was* a fool and all things show it—

Thought so once, and now I know it.'

(It was a brave effort, but the mirth was rather sickly.) "Even the editor of the Penny Cyclopædia hasn't much more for me to do. In short, composition is not my line, Harry. It's all gammon trying. I'm going in for business and accounts. Aunt Tylney knew me better than I did myself."

"Stuff!—business!—accounts!—you're joking."

"True as fate. At least I'm trying for all sorts of India and Government appointments, but shan't get anything. A year ago my poor dad could have got me more than one of the best, and then I wouldn't look at them; but now—well, he has no more influence than a crossing-sweep, I can see that plainly. So, as he finds, and as I am thankful to say, that I can help him, I'm trying to make up for past sins, and I work like a horse accordingly; God bless him! Then as soon as I can, I shall work for myself at anything that will soonest give me a house to live in, and a neat little income to keep the pot boiling. It shan't be my fault, you see, Harry, if somebody we know hasn't a home offered her, in spite of the old dragon."

"All right, Gerry, that's your first duty now."

"And business of some sort is the only chance. So I've pitched poetry and philanthropy overboard, for the present, and stick to the figures for amusement half the night, and do mental arithmetic all the way home. Up and at them! Ah, that's the tune; but, oh, Hal, by the powers, it's weary work, though I'm glad enough to help my dad!"

"He deserves all you can do, Gerry. What a game old prince he is; but the time is coming when you'll want all his pluck and your own too."

"I only wish I had half of it. I do so soon get beaten, and my digestion's out of order. It's dreary work up there in that office."

"I should think so. I must prescribe for you. But what *is* the work? Does it bring any of the ready?"

"Yes, the assignees allow me about as much as boots, gloves, and riding-whips used to cost. Two pounds a week at present, for a beginning."

A long, low whistle expressed Harry's opinion of this state of things. At length he remarked:

"It's a deuced shame! I—a big sinner—I've got nearly £500

a-year, or shall soon, and you a saint and a poet have to fag at accounts for £2 a week. Money's the root of all evil."

"The love of it, you heathen! But what do you mean?" continued Gerry, with wondering eyes. "Five hundred a-year!"

"Yes," replied his friend, deliberately. "I kept that to astonish you when the time came. My excellent old uncle has departed this life, repenting his cruelty to me, and leaving me £300 a-year on condition I attend divine worship in the Church of England four times a-year. Then you know I had £150 before from my father."

Gerald shook his friend's big hand lustily, exclaiming—

"That's jolly, by Jove!"

"No, it isn't, at all," replied Harry, dismally. Then, seeing Gerald's astonishment, he continued, hurriedly—"Well, well; I mean it will make us hate one another. I shall ask you to help yourself to my purse, and you'll look unutterable things, and then I shall hate you for your unchristian pride—and then you'll hate me for calling you proud—and yet it is an abominable shame if you won't let me (hold your tongue a minute). Now" (with intense vehemence) "*can* we be *real* friends if you won't let me help in such a trumpery way as this, when you have given me help *infinitely* more valuable! Are we to take up with the world's mean, miserable way of looking at tin? Oh, Gerry, Gerry, *don't*, I pray you, old Gerry boy, don't refuse this bit of rubbish; I brought it out on purpose" (trying to thrust a £50 cheque into Arlington's waistcoat pocket), and if it's hard work to see your plain duty and take it, just remember it's the sublimest act of self-sacrifice and affection to do so. Do as you'd be done by."

Gerald (with a slight pretence of taking a bit of dust out of his eye) replied: "I'll remember you're a regular old brick, and the other thing you mention, too, at the proper time, if you'll remember also, that in such matters there is only one step from the sublime to the mean. Now gently," continued Gerald, seeing the dejected look on Harry's face, "I'll do this, then, if you like; I'll take your cash as a loan, and lock it away in my desk, or put it in the savings' bank, and give you an I.O.U.—all on one condition—that you promise to keep the I.O.U. till I ask for it."

"And you swear you'll use it if you really want it?" asked his friend.

"Honour bright, I will. I promise to do as I would have you do to me, *mutatis mutandis*. And so, God bless you!"

"I'm satisfied. Shake hands on it!"

"And are you getting along yourself pretty well, Hal?"

"First-rate, Gerry. Here are the darbies!" (taking the hand-

cuffs from his pocket). "Ha, ha! I laugh and cry over them, Gerry, I believe you. But I really am in jolly good tune."

The words and tone were cheery enough; but Gerald could see it was more than half sham, and his heart ached for his friend, though even then he was beginning to understand something about the beneficial effects of Carlyle's "Fire-Baptism" to a brave, earnest, sinning, but upward-struggling soul.

The cutter shot past them, all five young fellows singing a lively part-song in a style that made the river as bright and sparkling, for a few seconds, to our friends as in olden time. They watched the singers for a moment. Then Harry exclaimed—

"Why don't *you* sing, Gerry?"

"Oh, I've given up all that long ago. But look, tide's turned—sun's set. Now for Westminster Bridge."

"Cut away," responded his friend.

"Our last row, Harry," said Gerald, "so pull with a will and make them wide awake in the cutter there."

"Here's an end to our youth," he added demurely, as they bent to their oars.

"The end of our youth!" Yet they were young enough still. Aye, but youth is not altogether an affair of years. So it was true enough. And those words contain deep meaning—if they and we knew it. "Rejoice, oh young man in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, &c.; but—" Glorious youth! Never, never can that wonderful mystery come over again. Why *don't* we value it more when we have it? Earth has nothing to equal it. Once gone, once and for ever.

* * * * *

Eh! is it so? Did we never hear that Heaven might be *perpetual* youth? "Gone for ever!" That is a long word. Is there not a promise somewhere about—"a door of hope," and "a pleasant land," "a new heaven and a new earth," and how one "shall sing there as in the days of her youth," and how "mourning shall be turned into joy?" Can it be that so glorious a boon as youth is given us but once throughout eternity—to be marred, and blundered through, so mournfully amid all our wretched ignorance and tyrannous passions—and then to come back to us no more for ever? Begone! oh infidel! Vanish!

* * *

When they had shot through Putney Bridge, Harry pulled gently for a few minutes, and said,—

"Your brother seems considerably improved."

"D'ye think so? Glad you do. So do I."

"Oh, he certainly is, and no mistake. By-the-by, how's that poor devil, young Featherstone?"

"Just the same."

"Ah, well, I glorified myself at the time, I'm afraid, on fishing him up; but what good did it do?"

"Nay, he wasn't particularly fit to shuffle off the coil then, Harry. Life's worth something. You may yet be thankful. He's better in one sense."

The talk was fragmentary, for soon both men were pulling again as if for their lives; yet with the old steady swing. Then another little interval—

"As how? Seems penitent?"

"Yes, and deuced gloomy. But his desperately low spirits seem eating the beast out of him. He spends a good deal of time in painting, which, luckily, he can enjoy sometimes for days together. And wonderfully beautiful things he perpetrates, mixed, of course, with a deal of grotesque and horrible rubbish."

"Does he know where he's got to?"

"Yes, when he's not raving. Tells me in quite a pitiful child-like way—poor beggar—that he says his prayers now."

"Egad! What about that little coxswain, and the surly chap?"

"Oh, Neddy's as brisk and knowing as ever. He is increasing that business wonderfully, and will be a great merchant and ship-owner before you're an eminent physician. He'll marry a very tall girl some day, buy an estate when he's fifty, and get himself made a county magistrate, just to have the police under him. As for old Nicholson, he is still on the 'Weekly Snarler,' they say; but I hope it's not true. Neddy christened Nicholson 'Snarley-Yow,' you know, one night at the 'Shades,' and it has stuck to him. But what do you think, Hal? I've learnt a secret. Neddy whispered to me the other day, with mysterious horror, 'Don't you ever get into print again—at least, don't let Snarley know if you do. He does all the reviews for the 'Weekly Snarler,' and rubs himself over with capsicum before he begins, unless he's first had a tailor's or his washerwoman's bill sent in, which does as well.'"

Harry's old hearty laugh rang out for a moment.

"Not so bad that, for Neddy."

But Gerald was looking pensive.

"Oh, begad!" said Harry, "I had forgotten. Why, it must have been he, then, that wrote that infernal review of your drama long ago."

Gerry assented.

"By George!" exclaimed his friend, "that fellow missed his vocation—always thought he was meant for a ratcatcher."

"Ratcatcher's dog, Harry. Yet no, that poor dog of Marryatt's,

Snarley-Yow, was a saint to Bobby, and has been irretrievably disgraced by having his name fixed on our sweet-tempered friend."

"Well," quoth Harry, drawing a long breath, "I'd like to pitch into the blackguard, and I will some day, depend upon it—that is, in a metaphysical way, you know. Confound him!"

"Can't be helped Hal. It's only his instincts."

Harry coloured slightly, seeing which, Gerry turned the conversation, and asked after Pierce.

"He's doing well, isn't he?"

"Yes, in his fashion, much better. The other fellow, Hackett, is a thorough scamp. But the medicals *are* a bad set, Gerry—*i.e.*, some of them—I'm sorry to say, until they get into regular practice, and then this magnificent work of healing seems to purify the sinners' dirty souls. But the whole tone among them is improving. Twenty years hence medical students will all be gentlemen. Oh, it's a grand work, Gerry, and I bless God—when I think of Him at all (worse luck, perhaps, it's not oftener)—that I took to it. And there's nothing like work after all. It is the only comfort in this world. Look where you're going. Pull for that light. Give way, and let's have done with it. I'm getting confoundedly sentimental."

They glided into Searle's, and the cutter's crew (already arrived) eyed them admiringly, yet triumphantly.

"Ah, we got to talking," said Fortescue, good humouredly. "Lay on our oars above Putney Bridge."

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed two or three of the crew.

"Pull against us to-morrow?" asked the stroke. "You're worth licking."

"Thanks. Should like it dearly, but leaving town. Good night."

The young men walked away, arm-in-arm, heavy hearted. "To-morrow!" The thoughts of both were in their dreary future: visions of lonely battling in the Tyrolese and Carpathian mountains filled the mind of one; of similar wrestlings and vain pining among ledgers and invoices and bankruptcy-courts, the mind of the other.

"The end of our youth." Farewell.

* * * * *

The last "good-bye" had been uttered in the rainy twilight on the Ostend steamer's gangway at the Tower Wharf. Harry was off and away up the Rhine, and Gerald went plodding on with his work day after day in Billiter Square. One evening his father looked up from his desk, and said, affectionately: "My boy, you ought to have a run in the country somewhere. I can do the rest

of this work with Tomkins, and there will be no more examinations or meetings of the assignees for two months at least. Are there none of your friends who would be glad to see you for a few weeks?"

"Thank you, father; I'll think about it. But I shan't go unless you can come too."

"Never mind me. I'm going home now by the half-past five omnibus. Will you put by the books and meet me at the 'Flower-pot?'"

"All right, sir. But hadn't you better go by the Hartland coach; you have had walking enough to-day, father," added Gerald, seeing how tired his father looked.

"No, my boy, I can't afford eighteenpence now when sixpence will do."

Gerald tried to follow him at once, but he didn't get in time, and came on by the next omnibus, nearly half an hour later. His father had been tortured for some days by examinations in the Bankruptcy Court. It had to come to that at last; and opposing counsel, with their cross-examinations, and ingenious surmises and plausible insinuations, brought the proud old man very low. If theologians are right in saying that a sense of sin is a needful prerequisite for true conversion, Mr. Arlington was receiving what many other respectable folk would be the better for—viz., some valuable experiences during those hot July days, though, perhaps, needing them less than many who stood very high in their own and general esteem; and, after all, his character would have come out virtually untarnished from the fire at last.

Young Arlington got off the omnibus at the usual place, whence there was a pleasant walk of about two miles to Hartland House, where the creditors wished Mr. Arlington to remain till it was sold. He stepped along briskly, hoping to overtake his father, which he did not do for a much longer time than he expected, for his father had said truly he was "going home."

There was a little crowd round the door of a turnpike house which he had to pass. As he came up, two or three persons lifted up their hands, and shook their heads in a dismal sort of way, when they saw him.

"Make way, make way; young Mr. Arlington."

The first objects that his eyes fell upon as he entered the little place were a man's boots pointing upwards to the ceiling. There, on the floor, lay his dead father—pale, motionless, a pillow under his head. Soon a horse galloped up to the door. The doctor entered. Yes, he was dead—no need of a doctor now,—no pulse

—heart disease. Gerald sat down on a chair and thought, "I can never help him again."

* * * * *

The Bankruptcy Commissioner and the lawyers—both opposing and defending counsel—rested from their labours that evening in their pleasant suburban villas or West-end mansions. Trains went roaring and rattling down the London and Birmingham and Grand Junction lines as usual. Ships floated in and out of the London Docks all that week. Gallant steamers ploughed their way across the Atlantic. The new and stately Royal Exchange, in the heart of the city, like other great companies, was flourishing under other masters. The dead man was no more to them than they were now, at length, to him. His gentle wife was gone to her rest. What better thing could have happened to him than that he should be resting too? Their boys had still to work and still to be assailed by fierce temptations and trials. But the brave old merchant's chances, his joys and sorrows, battles, triumphs, and errors in life, were all gone. For better, for worse, this world at length was at an end for him, with all his nobleness and sins whatever they were. Farewell, proud and public-spirited British merchant-prince. Perhaps the last year's struggle and tribulation were worth more to thee than all thy proudest and happiest days before—as may long since have been made plain to thee—to thee, perchance, thankful, humble, adoring.

CHAPTER VI.

Two young men sat in a counting-house looking on a wharf on the banks of a canal on the outskirts of the busy town of Longbeach. One left off writing to mend his pen, and the other left off to talk to him.

"Well, what say you to our Mr. Arkwright?"

"Oh, he'll do, I dare say. Bit of a spooney though, isn't he?"

"Keeps himself to himself, I admit. Slow at figures too, I see."

"Where did you pick him up?"

"Used to meet him when I lived at Deansford, a year ago. He lived independent like there; spent his time chiefly in reading and rowing; always made me welcome to his boat, and I used to

drop into tea sometimes. Sings divinely—for a man. Splendid voice. Reads poetry like a brick. Gentlemanly fellow; and has read a great deal, I should say," continued the clerk with dignity. "Well, when I left to take this situation he said, joking, perhaps he should like to get a berth of that kind some day; and sure enough, my young spark writes down to me about a month ago from London inquiring if I had one to offer him. So I went to the governor, and here he is."

"He's not amiss, but might be more sociable. You had better tell him so."

George Arkwright's entrance suspended further comment.

When the funeral was over, and their father's affairs wound up as far as Gerald and Richard could arrange them, the old home had to be finally abandoned. Miss Tylney, nearly all whose little savings had been lost in the wreck of the house, had received and accepted a very urgent and loving entreaty from Miss Fortescue (whose health had not been good lately), to come and live entirely at Neville Court. So she and Gerald sorrowfully went over the grounds of Hartland House together one day, for the last time, their hearts divided between thankfulness for having enjoyed it so long, and sorrow to think they should never come back to it as a home again. Gerald, as he lingered on the terrace walk, thought of the last and very different parting when he left it to go to Deansford; and of all its thousand memories, with a passionate flood of sorrow that would have made the fortune of some modern rhyme-sters. His aunt was little less affected, though her grief was more for her nephew, and for all she feared was before him. She had quite agreed with Gerald that he was right in bending all his energies, however painful it might be, to business of some sort; at all events until his friends could procure him either a Government appointment or a secretaryship of some kind or other, for which he was much more competent, as may be easily imagined, than for the ordinary routine of a clerk's duties. He remembered his quondam acquaintance at Deansford, and preferred applying to him to availing himself of kind-hearted but meddlesome Ned Grant's good offices, and wrote to him with the result above recorded.

Thereupon, having obtained a good report of the concern, he had offered to put into it all he had saved from his own little funds, with a trifle that had considerably been sent to him from the assignees of his late father's estate, with Harry's £50, on condition of having a share in the business in two or three years' time if matters went on successfully. This offer had been duly accepted, being backed by a highly influential recommendation from a staunch

old friend of his father's, who thought his reasons for taking an *alias*, for a time, sufficiently good, and connived at it accordingly. For having only been known to the young man at Deansford under his then assumed name of George Arkwright, and wishing to hide himself and his troubles, for a time at least, as effectually as he could, he determined to retain the said *alias*; a false step, even for a ticket-of-leave man, in general.

Richard Arlington shewed more feeling on the occasion of his father's sudden death than his brother had ever known him manifest before. Coming back alone with Gerald in the mourning-coach, after the door of the family vault had closed on all that remained of that father on earth, he turned to Gerald once, and said in a thick, constrained voice, "I'd give something, you know, Gerald"—then he couldn't get any further, and looked out of the window, but began again before long—"I'd give something, don't you see, if I could make sure of meeting him by-and-by as I used to do—coming home for the holidays. He *was* something of a man—a better one, you know, than I shall ever be—or p'raps you either, Gerry."

"We can but do our best, Dick," replied his brother. "If you would only do that you might be a finer fellow than I, or perhaps than he either, and meet him without blushing or fearing."

"Now look here, brother Gerry, I do mean to try; but it's no good trying too much; you're safe to be beaten then. All folks can't live like some folks. It's no use having too high a standard, mind you, or you'll only fall the lower. I have done with all those old tricks you used to blow me up about, and this is a good time to tell you so. I never mean to go back to them. But if I said I was going, or actually tried to set up for a saint as you do, I should be—well, with all due respect—a greater fool than you."

The brothers parted next morning; and Gerald was right in believing Richard would become quite as respectable a man (and be much more of a gentleman) as many who pass current in society for worthy people. A good impression, he saw, had been produced, but he did not see that a week or two of his ordinary life soon effaced it. There's nothing like thorough ingrained selfishness for sticking in a man's soul.

"God bless you, dear, dear Gerald! If ever I have a home of my own, or the means of making one, remember, I beg of you, there will be one for you when you want it, or will accept it." These were Miss Tydney's tearful last words to Gerald as he left Neville Court, after a week's stay there. They lingered very sweetly in his

ear, and dwelt in his desolate heart many a day, making him feel not utterly wretched and forlorn.

It had been, of course, a very peaceful and refreshing week at Neville Court; a very beautiful memory to Gerald Arlington for years afterwards, borne (as a desert pilgrim bears a supply from the last fountain) through the arid wastes he had now to travel, and "wherein were fiery dragons and scorpions." But a week is quickly gone. And the great "Captain of the host" soon bade him rise and march once more. So he arose and shouldered his burdens bravely, and went down to Longbeach, pondering over the changes that had taken place since he last left London, under a feigned name, to read and write his way, as he thought, up to widespread beneficent power, and an indefinite amount of admiration and love. It is somewhat to his credit, and a proof of the value, as he expressed it in his last letter to Harry, "of a man's face being brought to the grindstone," that he felt moderately thankful at having got a situation of £120 a-year, with duties before him which he supposed would be intensely distasteful.

Virtue, however, sometimes has other rewards besides itself.

His employer, a general coal, slate, and timber dealer, wisely availing himself of Mr. Arkwright's gentlemanly appearance and address, and relying on the high testimonials he had got from his father's old friend, a London merchant of high standing, sent him on various expeditions, occasionally in gigs or on horseback, to neighbouring towns and farm-houses to get and take orders, as well as to collect in moneys. All this was amusing and healthful enough for a time. Gerald threw himself into the occupation heartily, gave satisfaction, and, except when alone in his lodgings, was in a sensible frame of mind—i.e., of healthy cheerfulness. But in the lonely hours, in the long, dark winter evenings, as he sat by his solitary fireside, far into the night, thoughts of those that were gone, visions of the beautiful home they had made for him, memories of the old college life, and the drama-writing days, with all their glorious illusive "*Idealen*"—above all, haunting, pining, passionate longings to behold one fair young face to touch again the white slender hand that had more than once tremblingly returned his pressure—these fancies would come thronging up in fire-light and star-light till his heart ached sorely.

But that last vision was becoming strangely streaked and clouded, like the pale orb he so often looked on during his romantic midnight watchings, shining for awhile so brightly and then at intervals becoming obscured till it gave but a sickly uncertain light. After months of exclusive devotion to business, and constant mingling

with business men, he began unconsciously to feel that pressure of the world upon his higher nature which he had so dreaded and loathed in former days, and which, of course, is the besetting danger of all men actively engaged in its needful and honourable callings. Ignoble temptations and a lower standard of right and wrong, just as in former and in similar circumstances, began asserting their dominion over him. He had heard nothing of Leila Featherstone since she left England. His recollections of her began to be not wholly beautiful. He had always looked at her with a sort of distant reverence that somewhat chastened and toned down more ardent emotions—worshipping her “as a star apart.”

And the conquest he had gained over himself that moonlight night at Wimbledon, with the impression produced by her last letter to Miss Tylney, while deepening his reverence for her, had indeed exalted and spiritualized his love for her more than ever, but had not increased it. And now he sometimes felt, but with continually greater force, a craving for earthly comfort and earthly love. He could not help sometimes feeling that with all her sweetness and nobleness there was beneath it a certain hardness and sarcastic pride, perhaps self-will, that, in recollection, at all events, grated harshly on him. He believed it was partly the result of her early training and home influences, but partly also of inherited temperament. Even when she had yielded to his influence and accepted his views there seemed to have been a hard struggle to do so, instead of that soft womanly acquiescence which he longed to find in the woman he loved.

Poor Leila! she had been forced, indeed, to harden herself against all the assaults from within and without that she constantly felt were endangering the equilibrium of her little kingdom—and the struggles of her spirit against that early Calvinistic training, and afterwards against the various disturbing influences heretofore narrated, were constantly conflicting with the softer and more feminine elements of her essentially womanly nature. However the hardness, whencesoever it came, was sometimes evident enough; and the pride no less so, though she strove vehemently, sometimes with secret, bitter tears of penitence, against a vice that she felt was as unchristian as it was unfeminine.

While Gerald was engaged in literary pursuits, a semi-spiritual, wholly romantic state of mind made every thought of her harmonize with his ideal visions, and thrill along the pulses of his life with “beatific ecstasies.” But now that all his energies, his whole soul, were in matter-of-fact business, she appeared in a somewhat different and more prosaic light. He was gaining, though very

gradually, the means of marrying, which he had never in the faintest degree approximated to before; and was losing something of the lofty love that would have prepared for and glorified it. Then the atmosphere of the commercial room, which he could not altogether avoid, was producing some effect on a nature so intensely sympathetic with those around him, and so susceptible as his to outward and especially social influences, in the loose-end sort of life he often had to lead. What now had become of all his glorious dreams of reforming the world? "Whither had fled" those visions and passionate desires that aimed at elevating humanity to a level with the gods? Not dead—but in a death-like numbness, from which, if too prolonged, there would be no recovery. Temptations nobly vanquished heretofore began to beset him with a power he had never previously known. The common talk of many of his associates fitted too well with vice in some of its most specious and less repulsive forms—the flitting, irresponsible visits to hotels—coquettish waitresses and chambermaids—who while unhappily only too much accustomed to so-called "gallant little attentions," were demoralized by them and yet perpetually seeking them. Ah, well-a-day! those who have not been tempted will wonder that he was; some of those who have been will wonder if he resisted.

As noticed before, there was a good deal of religious sentiment, but no depth of real religious conviction and principle in him. Yet for a long time he did resist. One holy image—one fair, pure face still rose ever before him.

CHAPTER VII.

GERALD had discovered, after being some months at Longbeach, in the course of one of his journeys, that Alfred Featherstone had been removed from the neighbourhood of London to a private asylum about ten miles from the town he was living in, and he had taken an opportunity once or twice of calling to see the poor fellow. Though this was evidently of very little use, he felt a melancholy pleasure in doing something for Miss Featherstone—some little service of which she might one day hear, and for which he knew she would be grateful. On one of these occasions he was returning from the asylum to the town, where he had left the gig in which he

had been collecting bills among the farmers. His way lay by a footpath across a park, when he saw a group of ladies and gentlemen a little ahead of him engaged apparently in taking a laughing leave of one of their party. It was a lovely evening in May—one of those rare seasons which combine the luxurious warmth of early summer with the freshness of spring. Ere he reached the group they had divided, all except one lady turning off towards the stately mansion, and saying playfully to the companion whom they were leaving—"We don't expect you to sit up for us; we shan't be home till near midnight, that's certain; so take care what becomes of you. *Au revoir!*" The young lady whom they left, and who was attired in light semi-mourning, waved her adieux and turned along a path that led into the woods, stepping slowly along with elastic step like a meditative young fawn.

As Gerald came past the opening of the path he thought he knew that step and figure. Something about the lady at once rivetted his attention, though he was yet some distance off. She was evidently young and very graceful. He gazed and guessed. Her face was half averted, but on coming nearer he could not mistake either face or figure. Yes—it was the beautiful Lilybell herself, looking rather sad and very lovely—more lovely, more graceful than ever. As she heard his hesitating, advancing step, she looked towards him, and he thought he had never before realized the ethereal beauty which dwelt on her face. The sight of Gerald had a startling effect on the shy young girl. For an instant she seemed intending a rapid retreat. The blood tinged her transparent cheek, and she clasped her hands tightly together.

In reply to his hurried greeting (for his heart beat so quickly he could hardly speak), she answered with assumed calmness, and even with a touch of the old haughtiness and nonchalance—"This is a wonderful surprise, Mr. Arlington."

"And a great disappointment, I dare say," replied Gerald, recovering himself. "But do you *wish* to walk alone, Miss Featherstone?" he added, with a comical pathos, as he took her hand and looked straight into her eyes. How could she resist the tone and the look? All the haughtiness vanished in an instant, and they found themselves laughing together just as they used to do, and he thought he heard her answer softly—"Well, no; not now!" And then she gazed for an instant full in his face with a look on which the smile still lingered, but mingled with a sweet, trustful expression, and as he again took and pressed her hand she seemed to let herself sink into a resigned and happy acquiescence, as if the interview were a gift of Providence not to be rejected. The look of

anxious, weary pining, which had been resting on her face when Gerald first caught a glimpse of it, had wholly vanished, and was replaced by one so serenely glad and peaceful that it made Gerald's heart leap with joy as he replied—

"Have you," said he—"have you ever thought of our old acquaintance at all since ——" and there he stopped.

"I have been wearying a little to see you once or twice, I must confess," she answered, with a faint blush and smile; "but it was better not."

To hear her confess this—to see those large, dark eyes glancing at him once more with such ill-concealed happiness, and with all their old fascinating power, and not to bow himself very low before her, and then to rise and draw her to his heart and pour out all his love—could he resist?

But yet, even in that moment of rapture, as he looked at her, icy barriers appeared to be rising up between them. The maiden seemed soon to retreat into her shell again. Both intuitively knew that there was one thought—one voice bidding them stand apart. It was not, now, Gerald's friend that came between them, No! It was the remembrance of an old grey-headed man—it was the words of an old ballad, one of the most touching ever written, "Lord Ullin's Daughter," which he had once heard Leila sing with a dramatic power he never forgot—words that, though she had not much power of voice, had haunted him ever after like the "water-wraith" of which they tell—

". . . I'll meet the raging of the skies,
But not an angry father."

Stone walls and armies could not have restrained him more effectually from speaking of his love than the thought of that father, the darkness of whose wrath Gerald saw reflected in the sacred and most touching sadness which gradually came over the face of his beloved. She seemed for a time, indeed, to become so cold and passionless, that he drew back a step. Was she devoid of feeling, then? Truly there was a giant force in her soul controlling as loving and wild a woman's heart as ever beat. She could be loyal to duty, though that heart were to break in the struggle. But she did not turn away from him. She did not ask him to leave her. She remembered when she had once asked him not to leave her, and could not feel it was wrong for them to be together now. She had long been schooling herself to place her love for Gerald on so pure and lofty a footing that it no longer, except for a moment of surprise, seemed like an earthly passion; and, with all her old noble ascetic tenderness and self-denying strength, for

months she had been winging her upward solitary flight. So that when that first surprise had passed, she felt it was no sin to love him in the way which she believed in her heart she did. Even her father could not, dare not, forbid such love as hers. She felt that this sweet little interview was sent as a very precious blessing and rest to her soul, and that any further brief intercourse they could have now was only binding their souls together in lofty friendship—not in earthly love—strengthening and ennobling them for future trial and work, while preparing them for an eternal union in a higher world.

Therefore, she suffered him to walk beside her, and they went wandering on in the fast-darkening twilight among the trees, over the soft turf and along beautiful glades in the park. A few words explained their respective positions. Leila's father had been summoned to England as joint-executor to a distant relative lately deceased. She and her mother had accompanied him. Mr. and Mrs. Featherstone were in London for a few days of business arrangements, but were coming down to Bushney Hall the next day, where an old friend resided, and which was near the estate of the deceased cousin. It was the propinquity of both relative and friend that led to Alfred's removal thither, and Leila had been sent down to the Hall as soon as they arrived in England, at the urgent invitation of the family there, with whom she was a great favourite. They were going that evening to a distant dinner-party, and were leaving her with profuse apologies, little dreaming of the singular *rencontre* she was to have instead of their company. At the expiration of a week the Featherstones were to return to the Continent, and proceed to Dresden, where they expected to meet Adelaide and her husband, if the latter did not suddenly change his mind, and whisk her off to Florence. "He was not so considerate as he might be," Leila confessed with a sigh, but her sister had a beautiful little headstrong boy who was the joy of her otherwise rather trying life.

The sorrowful tale of Gerald's loss was told (mention of the bare fact was all that had reached the Featherstones), and then he explained his present position and duties, referring, with a lame attempt at humour, to the utter rout and dispersion of all his old literary, philanthropic, and ambitious dreams. Leila smiled responsive, but thought, and frankly said, how much higher and more truly noble might be his course now, perhaps, by carrying the light of a higher life into the atmosphere and paths of business; and when she saw the profoundly despairing look gathering over his face, as (with prophetic insight) he felt his own inability,

morally or intellectually, to realize the ideal in her mind, she could not help saying once more how exactly she thought him fitted for the work of the Christian ministry, and when she noticed the impatient shake of his head, a great sigh would force its way as she thought of all the blessed life and opportunities of a clergyman in an English parish. But Gerald felt far otherwise concerning both that life and the Dissenting ministry. Her words only made him conscious, to some slight extent, though by no means fully, of the overpowering secularity, so to speak, of his whole mind and tendencies, in spite of his real devotional feelings; and this might seem the more strange because it is certain that a very noble ideal of purity and self-sacrifice had been wrought as it were into the very fibre of his mind by the early influence of his mother and aunt, and of the books and sermons they had led him to love. That ideal, perhaps half unconsciously to himself, had come from the image of a self-sacrificing and crucified divine "Galilean;" yet the holy and suffering Christ had always appeared to him as at an infinite distance from the world, moral and material, in which he lived—to have nothing to do with art or poetry, philanthropic reforms, or political regeneration. Hence an utterly impassable gulf seemed to yawn between him and the ministerial life in any form. Yet he could not clearly explain all this to Miss Featherstone. She understood, indeed, his objections to the Thirty-nine Articles, and he intimated his old dislike of much of the Dissenting economy, and of what he fastidiously and even falsely called the social deficiencies of Dissenters. But he did not speak because, alas! he did not understand, and therefore could not speak, of their faithfulness and deep religious convictions—of the noble disinterestedness and unworldliness as well as fervent piety and living faith of many of their ministers who, by uttering a few false words, might have been lapped in intellectual luxury, and nursed in aristocratic gentility at Oxford or Cambridge—welcomed in due course to most respectable curacies and comfortable livings. As Gerald neither appreciated nor understood anything of this, he could not speak of it any more than he could appreciate that higher spiritual tone of mind and character which makes the Christian ministry, whether in the Church of England or out of it, so profoundly honoured and loved by genuine Christians. Instead thereof he dilated in glowing terms and in his old bewitching style on all that art and poetry offer of beauty and joy—on all that might and should be unfolded from it—on the miserably cramping, gloomy tendencies of clerical bondage and austerity. Leila listened, and, for a time, felt the fascination of former days coming over

her. It was very sweet to listen to his soft musical tones, and proudly, though furtively, glance at his glowing cheek and bright flashing eye—to be handed by him over the fallen trunk of a tree, and over the narrow bridge across a little streamlet that went singing on its way, as if rejoicing that two true hearts had met, while offering them some of those

“ . . . Sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.”

Yes, she believed in him, for to her he was a bright revelation of her Creator's love, and he had brought her a portion of her Creator's peace.

And as the full moon began to throw its silvery light far and wide they wandered on towards a bosky wilderness that stretched away with miles of bridle paths traversing it. Then Leila told Gerald, with a little blushing smile, that the servants would not be surprised at not seeing her home soon, for she had said she would go and take tea with her old nurse, now nearly blind, and living at the cottage of a son, who was a gamekeeper on the Bushney estate.

As they wandered on into the leafy wilderness under the deep shadows of great trees, and out again into the sheeny light of the moon, looking down bright turfy glades, where in distant groups the graceful deer were quietly reposing or feeding, then through chequered shadows, and again out into the full radiance which bathed them in its light—Gerald, with his usual dreamy intensity, felt as if an archangel had come down from heaven and entered into him, lending him all his own radiant life and power. And Leila was not afraid of walking there beside him, for she could not resist the feeling that her Heavenly Father's smile was on them. At first she thought of him whose affliction had thus brought Gerald and her together—of her poor brother in his lonely cell—kept intruding and saddening her joy, but before long that thought, too, was harmonized in the felt presence of a heavenly love brightening the universe, “making all things work together for good,” and showing by the very loveliness of the scene around them how the bright lights and dark shadows of life all combine to produce the highest harmony. Something of this sort she whispered to her companion, who caught her inspiration. And as with thoughts chastened and lifted for a time into a lofty region of faith and hope they wandered on—their hearts wrapt in each other's love, and their souls steeped in the exceeding beauty of the scene—there came over them both a sense of something far more glorious awaiting them, of which that season was only the bright forerunner. So on and on, sometimes whispering a few words, sometimes in

hushed silence, with thoughts and feelings growing in them too deep for words, they continued strolling side by side through the soft May-blossom scents and early summer air, amid sleeping flowers and delicate sprays of honeysuckle that in the occasional breath of the night-wind seemed to heave just one fragrant sigh of welcome as they passed—on and on, again beside the rivulet sparkling in the moonbeams, past the old doddered oaks, through a grove of dark meditative pines, between whose boughs the moon looked more lovely than ever, over the bright grassy mounds where the fairies had been dancing a moment before—through the open lawny space where the hares were feeding, and where the turf was carpeted with harebells and rose-campions—on and on to an old moss-covered seat in the shadow of some huge forest trees near “a bank where the wild thyme” grew. There on that bank, and in the little open space before them, the moonbeams were resting so brightly and yet so tranquilly; and there, shut out from all the world, Gerald took Leila’s hand, and overcoming her slight resistance, made her sit down beside him. Then yielding insensibly to the intoxication of the scene, she found herself irresistibly impelled to whisper—

“And may I love you, Gerald, still? Have you kept your faith—your early vows?” The words came trembling from her quivering lips, while her eyes met his with a rush of pleading, innocent love.

“Leila,” said Gerald, with deep earnestness, as he took both her hands in his own, and gazed straight into her beseeching eyes, “Could I look at you thus had I not? Yes, thank God, I *have* kept true to that higher law which——” but as he saw the look of indescribable happiness which came into those eyes, and felt a wild overpowering joy in his own heart, he clasped her in his arms, and gave her the first kiss of pure heavenly love. Could she blame him? Why, with that embrace, following, as it did, the avowal he had just made, every thought and feeling but that of passionate love and happiness was for a moment swept away like a torrent from her mind, and she returned his kiss with all the fervour of a long cherished, yet long restrained affection. * * *

“Oh, but this is very different,” whispered Leila at last, as she gently disengaged herself, with a charming little confused laugh, “from what I meant when I came——”

“Aye,” whispered Gerald, in return; “but is it not what our Heavenly Father meant?”

Rather different, certainly, from the calm Platonic friendship which was all that our poor little Lilybell had intended to allow herself when she last wrote to Gerald before leaving England, or

even when, with somewhat haughty condescension, she consented to his accompanying her that evening. But as they wandered along, she had felt what seemed a divine impulse bidding her yield her whole heart to the man who had so long and so self-sacrificingly loved her, and who she had long felt also was worthy of all the love she could give him in return. So she rested there on her lover's arm in perfect peace and joy, with their hands clasped, and their souls blending together in one. And then at length Leila whispered—

"I can't think what makes you care for me so much. It seems so strange."

"It seems a great deal stranger to me," murmured Gerald, "that you should care for me, my Lilybell, at all."

And then Leila blushingly whispered her confession of having seen him kiss her flowers and lay them in his bosom once, and then of having called her lover back, though in vain, when they were parting in that dingy back parlour in the city; and then Gerald started for a moment to his feet, and upbraided her so piteously, yet playfully, for not having called louder, that she couldn't help laughing at him outright; and then an owl answered so near that they both started. Leila declared it had been reading somebody's drama, and, quoting therefrom, said it was hooting Gerald for being so foolish; whereupon Gerald proved the correctness of that view by having no answer to give her but a repetition of a former offence, for which she tried to scold him (but very gently), and almost made him promise not to do it again; but she did not unclasp her hand for all that. Then they sat a long time silent, looking down the partially moon-lit glade, or up to the moon itself glinting between the boughs, and to the single star that waited by her side, till Leila began to confess all her admiration for Gerald's dramatic romance, and "how very bad" it had made her feel, and how conceited, she was afraid, it would have made him if the critics hadn't treated him so shamefully. But Gerald soon satisfied her that he didn't care then for any critics but herself, and so they gazed on silently. They might well look. The brilliant moonlight invested the forest around them with a weird beauty that was indescribable—even transforming what, seen by daylight, would have appeared common-place and poor into effects of magical loveliness, contrasting the brightest light with the deepest shadows, while that tender radiance of the light, and mystic obscurity of the darkness, which has been the joy of poets and lovers since the world began, threw their strange unearthly fascination over the whole scene, and of itself was enough to make the lovers feel they were transported into some new and heavenly region.

"Oh," said Leila, at length, with a soft sigh of happiness, "how your words and the books you have lent me, and that wonderful dramatic affair, have transfigured this beautiful world to me!"

Then they talked of Schiller and "Play," and the worship of Beauty, and of Gerald's drama, and of that eventful night in Portland Place; and Leila told her lover how ever since then she had tried so hard to make her music a gospel of life and peace to all who heard it, and how that aim had made the drudgery of hard practising and all other drudgery so different from what it used to be. And, of course, he looked intensely happy to hear it. Then again there was a long, sweet silence, broken by Leila's remarking, with hypocritical remorse—

"Dear old nurse! She'll wonder what has become of me." And that made Gerald think of the last time when he had been with Leila, as she was on her way to see that excellent old lady, for whom, as he said, he began to conceive a romantic attachment. And he told Lilybell something about what had passed between him and his horse after she left him; whereupon Leila looked up with that provoking, sarcastic smile again, and answered, mischievously:

"It's lucky your knowing young friend, Mr. Edward Grant, (Isn't that his name?) didn't know *that*; and, perhaps," she added with a sigh, "it's lucky I didn't know of it either, or I'm afraid I should have just a little envied Gypsey, and then I might have been cross with nurse."

"Ah, but Gypsey hasn't got the kiss this time, my Leila!" whispered Gerald.

So time went on. Only the silvered trunks of the old trees, and the deep shadows, and the honeysuckles and, the soft night wind, and the lingering white clouds, and the rest of that moonlight vision, knew anything about those two lovers seated there, who, in the purity and rapture of this first abandonment to their long-cherished love, were lost in the beautiful new world into which they had that night entered—not a word passing, but many a glance and many a sigh.

"Oh, Gerald," said Leila, at length, "how I do wish you might sing a little bit . . . but it won't do. We might have the gamekeepers down upon us!"

"Some day, my Lilybell—some day, you know—I'll sing to you—where the gamekeepers can't get at us."

A slight rustling in the thicket startled them from their delicious dreams. It was only a graceful deer, browsing as it came into view; then starting for an instant as it caught sight of the lovers, but apparently reassured by their innocent looks and tranquillity, it

just shook its elegant head, and gently trotted away into the surrounding shadows, as much as to say, "Not much harm there."

But so must pass away that hour of rapture. *Continued* heaven is not for earth, and the fairest moments here fleet from us, as well as the dreariest. For then the maiden looked at her watch, and in alarm rose to go, and then Gerald drew her down to him again, and, with eloquent eyes shining into hers, said, "Now, now, my beloved, before we part, you must promise me to be one day *my wife*, sweet Lilybell, as soon as ever I can support you—will you?"

For one moment longer she lay passive in his arms, with that wonderful, loving tenderness in her eyes deepened and brightened by the sacred word her lover had just used. Then with a slight shudder she gently released herself; for that word at length awoke her from her dream. To Gerald the blessedness of the hour had been ever and anon dashed with the haunting, miserable thought which he could not wholly banish—the image of the father of the girl whom he so worshipped. But that image had seldom been absent from the daughter's mind. The sacrifice with her to her father's will had been complete. Hence, as we have seen, she had come fortified by previous discipline and high resolve. Not so, of course, with Gerald.

"*I am* your own, Gerald dearest," she whispered, as she drew slightly apart from him, "though you must not claim me in Time—not till" (and then there was that sweet, sad smile again), "not till Eternity. Long ago I resolved I would be no man's wife on earth but yours, and now you must not claim me, dearest, as—an earthly bride—unless—. But, oh! I know more surely than ever my father will never consent, and without that I *cannot* marry you. Oh, Gerald! I cannot bear to tell you, but I must—I ought—I ought to have told you before we came here." (A moment's pause, and then with faltering voice) "My mother spoke to him for me before we left Brussels, and he was so ill in consequence, the doctor feared apoplexy; he said another attack might be fatal. Would you have me come to you with the guilt of his death upon me? And oh, Gerald! while he lay on his sick bed and held my hand, I gave him a promise I would never marry you without his consent. And he may die without giving it—and I never ought to have come here unless you—but I thought we might promise to love one another, to belong to one another, for ever,—even though" (again her voice trembled) "we may not marry." Then seeing the shock that her words were giving her lover, she hurried on, "But, Gerald, I am your own for ever. When you gave me that first kiss, dearest, you put your seal upon me as your own. Ellen's lover kissed her

once, she told me, before they parted for his last voyage. I am thine; no man but my father shall ever touch those lips again, and oh, Gerald, I *do* love that father very, very deeply! Promise me," she continued with increasing earnestness, "promise me you will never again ask me to marry you unless he consents. Oh, Gerald!" she exclaimed, when he started to his feet as if a serpent had stung him, "can we not love one another with this infinite, holy, glorious love of ours without earthly marriage?"

But he could only gaze at her in wild amazement. At length he faltered out—

"Will you not then some day be my wife?"

"In heaven — beloved." But, then, as Gerald's head sunk on his breast and he covered his face with his hands, the thought that his love for Leila, which was the only *treasure* he could offer her, and yet the greatest, inconceivably the most precious offering, if true and pure, that man could make to woman, that this was viewed by her father with loathing, that he himself was regarded by one so very dear to her as a hateful enemy—*her* father, to whom he would willingly have been as devoted and affectionate a son as ever father had possessed—there was *the* misery of that strange hour. He had often felt it before, but it now came with the added and inconceivable anguish of seeing his beloved, in consequence, torn apart from him for ever, for in his then state of mind and character this life was all in all to him. A half-stifled groan, while he threw himself on the seat by her side and buried his face in his hands, was the only answer he could give.

Poor Leila was as much surprised as shocked at the effect of her words. Gently she drew one of his hands from before his face, on which she then saw the full darkness of the shadow of his terrible disappointment.

"Oh, Gerald!" she whispered, with a strange mixture of haughty tenderness and subdued passion—"dear, dear Gerald, I thought we understood one another better than this! Do not—*do* not look so miserable. Why should we be unhappy? Are we not one—one for ever in our holy trust and immortal love? My father *hereafter* will know as he is known, and will honour you as I do; and he cannot—*cannot* come *between our souls, even on earth.*" As Gerald looked up in her face she kissed the hand she had clasped, and then, dropping it with a dreamy smile and looking upwards as if she were lost in infinite depths of love and adoration, she slowly rose and stood there silently in all her nymph-like grace and loveliness. The moonlight shone full upon her figure as it stood out in bright

relief against the dark background; her straw hat had fallen off, and her long tresses fell on her shoulders. Then, raising her arm and pointing upwards with a look as if of romantic, lofty disdain for earthly things, she exclaimed softly—

“Oh, Gerald! I do believe what the Book of Life tells us—what your own glorious prophet, that noble American writer, helped me so much to realize—that God is Love. I do believe that He meant us—*you and me*, beloved—meant us for love and happiness, and for all things bright and beautiful and pure. These may not come just now—just when *we* want and expect them—but, oh! they *will* come, and then we shall *know* how He loves us! Dear, dearest Gerald,” and she bent over him and laid her soft hand on his throbbing, upturned forehead, as he lay half reclined on the seat, “*I am* thine own, thine only love. Shall we not outlive those stars? Will not our love endure far, far beyond this world, and even that starry world on high? What are a few years on earth? Oh! Gerald, my own beloved, can we not afford to wait? We who have an eternal existence before us full of all heaven’s beauty, power, love—we who have infinite riches in our love for one another on earth, and in God’s boundless love for us and all—will not that be better than marrying under a father’s curse? Wait,—oh, let us wait on the Lord,” she whispered. “Is it not written—‘Blessed are they that wait for Him?’ Hark!”

Just at that moment, by one of those singular and happy coincidences occasionally noticed, a few soft notes and then a noble old melody, beautifully played on a key-bugle in the distance, came floating up, probably performed by some belated musician returning home across the park. The effect was singularly enchanting. Gerald, sensitive enough at all times to outward influences, felt completely carried away by it. Leila stood listening like a youthful prophetess (Joan of Arc, for instance) receiving her message from above—as her brother had once seen her on the mountain by Windermere—all the latent poetry and devotion of her nature glowing in her face. Then, as the sweet and solemn strains died away in the distance, she added in a hushed voice—

“Those sounds, are they not the heavenly foretaste of the tones that will welcome us some bright summer evening to our Father’s home there above? Perhaps the music of the angels rejoicing over us, Gerald, will be our wedding hymns. For *wedded souls* will meet in heaven, though there be no earthly marriage there.” Once again the notes rose on the air, still farther off, then died quite away—but the effect coming in the solemn silence of that quiet moonlit night was unspeakably beautiful. It was all that

was needed to make the moment perfect in its heavenly and spiritual, though far from unmixed earthly, blessedness. For the gradual "dying fall" of the brief symphony seemed to speak of their swift approaching separation. Gerald had raised himself, and was looking almost awe-struck at the sweet young face turned to the skies, full of a pure and solemn beauty, on which the slight look of scorn still lingered, even though the tears were already gathering in her flashing eyes.

The fallen trunk of a large tree lay across the sward near where they had been sitting. Nature had wreathed it round with innumerable creepers, lovely convolvuluses, and sprays of woodbine, which gleamed in the bright moonlight—orchids grew in the fissures of the decaying wood, variegated mosses spread themselves over it—wild geraniums and bluebells grew up lovingly by its side. Leila moved towards it, and stooped to pick some of the flowers, brushing away her tears as she plucked them. For years after, Gerald remembered the whole scene and the very colours and forms of the beautiful vegetation with wonderful distinctness; for who has not known the vivid impression surrounding objects make upon us at such moments of intense excitement? Then, as she turned with clasped, uplifted hands, looking again towards heaven, she softly exclaimed: "Yes, Lord, we will be Thine. We come to Thee. Thou callest us—we are Thine," and remained bowed for a moment in silent prayer. Then, returning to Gerald, she took his hand once more, saying: "Beloved, have we not found our rest? Once you took some flowers which I had not given you; take these now as a pledge of that rest which our Lord giveth." She laid the flowers she had plucked in his hand, while he, poor fellow, half-maddened with passion, and yet spell-bound with reverence, gazed at her in her heavenly, Madonna-like beauty and faith—gazed and listened to her till the strange influence of her spirit passed into his own soul. With a great effort he conquered at once the miserable heart-sickness and the wild passionate longing to fold her to his heart and never let her leave him more.

"Oh, Leila!" he exclaimed, as he half knelt, with one foot on the fallen trunk, looked up in her sweet face, and reverently pressed her hand to his lips, "my own beautiful, holy Leila, I will try to be worthy of you. I promise you all you have asked of me. God will be with us."

She pressed the hand he held out to her—gave him one look of such grateful love and thanks as he had never seen even on her dear, romantic face before. Then, placing one little sandalled foot on the old trunk, she stepped lightly across it, on through the

moonlit glades, looked round at him with a faint smile, beckoned him, and vanished in the gloom. He sprang after her; and so once again, but now silently, with throbbing hearts, they re-trod their path towards the house. At length, as if by an effort awaking from a dream, Leila said :

"We must not part without my letting you know, Gerald, how very thankful mamma and I were for all you said about poor Alfred in that letter to Miss Tylney, and for all you have done. She managed to let us hear of your visits, and what you said, and though—though your highness's name was not mentioned, I had a faint suspicion who 'the friend' she referred to might be. Will you sometimes continue to see him, Gerald, now that you are in the neighbourhood, if it is not too painful to you, till—till all is over?"

"It will be just the greatest happiness of my life to do anything that will please and serve you—and for poor Alfred's own sake too, I will gladly see him."

He thought he was saying nothing but the simplest truth. He felt strong—in *his own strength*.

In what seemed a wonderfully short time they came to where their paths must diverge. The reaction from their romantic and exalted tone of mind, from all the strange exciting scenes of the last two hours, must needs come, and come mournfully enough, in that sad parting moment.

Leila was quick to mark the growing sadness, even gloom, which in spite of his brave words and high resolve, began to gather over her companion's face. The long years of separation that must lie before them, if they lived, rose up in all their painful dreariness. She had no misgivings for herself. In the romantic frenzy of the hour she thought she was undertaking nothing she could not accomplish. The sacrifice, as was said above, had been made completely on her part. There was no looking back even in that moment. But the thought flashed upon her, and naturally came again and again with terrible vehemence and distinctness during the last ten minutes of their walk, that perhaps she had been proposing to Gerald Arlington far more than she was right or wise in asking. She felt she *must* leave him absolutely free. So with difficulty she brought herself to say, as they paused by the little bridge :

"But Gerald, remember—I pray you, dear, foolish Gerald (for you *are* foolish to care so much about me), never, never forget that *you* are not bound—not bound to me on earth by anything that has passed between us this night. I have no right, no ——" (wish, she was going to say, but could not) "to ask, to propose for a

moment that you should be bound to me in any sense—should even remember me one hour beyond what you yourself may deem right and fitting. Our lives in this world must be apart henceforth. You will tread a high and noble path wherever it may lead—for you have *some* wisdom. You will be living for others, I know, whatever may be your earthly calling. I shall hear of you, but we shall not meet. I pray you, remember that I am not, cannot be, a judge of what is right and best for you to do. It will be enough for me to know that you loved me once, wholly, and that you are useful and honoured on earth—honoured too, I think, you will be in heaven,” she added. “And believe that I shall be quite happy, oh, beloved and misguided one! though you are so mistaken as to love me now. Yet, if——. Yes, even if—if some years hence, you feel too dull and lonely to live without such a companion in your earthly home as I may not be, then, dearest, remember you are *not* bound to me on earth, *only* let us meet in one of those mansions of our Father’s home. Blessings be with you for ever, for all you have been to me. Farewell!”

She could say no more. Driving back the tears that, in spite of her attempted smile, would press into her eyes, she parted from him and went her way. One above only knew what it cost her to say what she then did. But she would not betray to him for whom she would have borne the rack the terrible struggle within her. To send him on his way through life from that hour (as far as her influence was concerned) peaceful, rejoicing, free, was then the overmastering desire of her soul; and, therefore, she veiled from him in that last moment all the conflict, the wild, stormful cravings and emotions of her heart. She would not, could not, trust herself, even to a last embrace, scarcely to look in his face again. She just shook hands and turned away. For his sake she turned from him with a light and cheerful smile, even while the expression on his face went like a dagger to her heart. For his sake she crushed down all her own emotions, and, therefore, unknowingly, she left him believing that while so gloriously, romantically spiritual in her nature, there was after all too little of the woman there—too little, at least, to match with his love—too much lofty pride—and that her feelings for him were but as the glittering glaciers and snowy wreaths around the volcano fire of that love he felt for her. In those last parting moments when he would have had her fling herself into his yearning, passionate embrace, and then (if she must) tear herself away with the sobbing anguish he felt rising in his own heart, she seemed so cheerful, cold, and passionless—nay, alas, almost, it seemed to him, distant and proud! Then the odious thought forced

itself on him—"How much might not pride and coldness have had to do with the promise she gave her father—with the whole course she had just been marking out for herself—with the part she had even asked him to play as being so lofty and grand?" How often before during their acquaintance had he not felt the same most painful characteristics in her nature?

Cruel Gerald! But it was his sufferings made him so bitterly unjust, and even rather obtuse withal. But his mind was clouded after that brief flood of light—conflicting passions, alternate transport and misery, had made him for the time utterly unable to reason, or even to see anything in its true colours. He deemed her comparatively cold and passionless! Could he but have seen her when the necessity for concealment was over—when she gained her own room and threw herself on her knees by her bedside, sobbing as if her heart would break—he would have understood her better—have loved her rather more truly, more worthily. But he had parted from her without a word in answer to her last appeal to him—had turned away from her as she did from him, with a poor cold shake of the hands. She knew he might have been unable from the very intensity of his feelings to answer that appeal with a passionate disclaimer of the possibility of his ever marrying another. She knew her manner repelled, and was intended to repel, any tenderer leave-taking. And yet with human, especially feminine, inconsistency, the thought would come—Oh, if he would but have broken through those barriers she had raised—had but given her one last kiss on earth,—

"No, no, no!" she exclaimed, weeping. "Far, far better as it was!"

Yet though that parting was so sad, and the weary, wakeful hours of that night to each were so full of great suffering, the next morning, and many succeeding hours, from time to time, brought to each very peaceful and beautiful thoughts, laden with consolation and hope. The memory of that singular and romantic moonlight ramble brought inspiration, especially to Leila. Again and again she whispered to herself, "His soul is pure!" She felt as if in spite of all surrounding cares and all future trials, she had, for a few moments, breathed and lived the life that is to come. And Gerald, he too seemed to have risen into a higher and more spiritual state of existence. Striving to harmonize all his feelings towards this lovely ethereal sort of being—who had bowed herself down from her lofty sphere, like Beatrice to Dante, for a brief season to meet and bless him, and then to call him up to her own pure beatitude—he rose for a time to a true spiritual-mindedness himself, and "walked among the stars." Again and again we

have to quote, "Could we but *keep* the heights which we are competent to gain," and to answer, "Why then we should be very different from what we are." Being what we are, however, we cannot over-strain our nature, even for the loftiest and most spiritual aims, with impunity, as many a noble enthusiast, especially in past and sometimes even in present days has found to his and her cost. In the present instance the consequences to Gerald Arlington of Leila's exalted self-sacrifice for her father's sake were likely to be scarcely less serious than they had been to her earlier lover. It was not *self*-sacrifice only. Was she not carrying the obligations of filial duty and affection rather too far? Her course was the more questionable because her father's objections to Gerald, apart from the young man's having no present means of marrying (rather a serious objection, that, however), were groundless and unjust, as well as vindictive. Yet no martyr ever went to the flames with more undoubting conviction that duty demanded this sacrifice than that with which Leila Featherstone immolated herself, and him who was infinitely dearer to her than self. But she had no conception of what she was inflicting on the man whom she had allowed to take her to his heart. How could she be expected to know that two such earnest, seemingly high-principled young men as Harry Fortescue and young Arlington would be in danger of making shipwreck of their principles, perhaps even of their whole lives, because *she* could not marry without her father's consent? She judged them too much by herself. Always devout, she was now enthusiastically religious, and could indeed at this time have devoted herself to realize that lovely yet sorrowful vision of living like the Mère Angelique, or Clara of Assisi, which had often hovered before her.

For the next few years, under any circumstances, her sufferings would often be great. But could she have lived in England, in a quiet country town or village with her parents, where she would have had a daily round of simple duties and plenty of opportunities for daily beneficence, visits to poor or suffering neighbours, alternating with studies, music, Sunday and day schools, church ordinances, and the society of a few friends, she could have gone on her way in peace after a time, as hundreds of noble-minded women do—growing more meet for heaven as she neared the end of what would have been her comparatively lonely pilgrimage on earth. Or even if she could have been tolerably stationary anywhere abroad, she would soon have made for herself a home and a sphere of loving duties wherever she was permitted to take root. But all this was forbidden. Her father, with restless irritability,

her mother, with fancied valetudinarianism, both with secret grief for their eldest daughter and their only son, kept continually moving from place to place, yet almost wholly depending for their pittance of daily enjoyment on the one daughter remaining with them; loving her with a very deep affection, while they were utterly destroying all her chances of happiness, usefulness, and, as at last it seemed likely to prove, even of health and life. One other requisite, by-the-by, for her to have lived peacefully under the rule she had laid down for herself, and the views she had adopted, was that she should be divested of that striking and dangerous loveliness which attracted no end of admirers, some of whom were not to be repelled even by the calm, haughty indifference which she manifested to their persistent attentions.

Her parents, however, were far from feeling that indifference. To see her happily married was not only greatly desired by them for her sake, but by Mr. Featherstone especially, as a means of effectually putting an end to "that hateful and absurd attachment which his daughter had once cherished for the young scoundrel who had insulted him, son of the man who had betrayed and half-ruined him." Besides, to both father and mother, it would have been a new and charming interest in life to be frequent visitors to their favourite daughter's married home, and to see her surrounded by a husband and children. What could be more desirable and proper? Why, why did she thus turn coldly, sadly away from the most eligible offers, and only describe them as "persecutions?"

Well, here for a while we must leave the poor girl in her beauty, her romance, and her sorrows, with One all-compassionate Friend leading her in the way that she should go towards perfection, answering all her deep, sighing prayers, though not always in the way she desired—One who was surely *deserving* all that child-like trust and devoted love she gave Him, whatever the unbelieving world might choose to say.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHAT we have next to relate of Gerald Arlington will, perhaps, seem to many too inexplicable to be believed. But there are others who will know it was just the most natural thing in the world to befall him.

He had returned to the usual routine of his daily duties, to his

desk and journeys, also to the companionship of the commercial room, which was necessary to a certain extent to enable him to do the needful business, but as he neither smoked, nor drank, nor delighted in scandal, its intercourse was not always highly agreeable. Not only all his early dreams of poetry, art, fiction, beneficent ambition, but even love—*i.e.*, the earthly hope and dream of wedded love, which is the right and natural goal of affection and passion for mortal man—now were all removed, and, as it seemed, for ever, from the sphere of his lawful hope and desire. He found his daily work taxed his utmost strength and attention, so that he was too fagged in the evening for any kind of study severer than that of the newspapers. Novels and poetry he abjured. At first he found a rather wishy-washy relaxation in a game of cards or back-gammon, or when at home, in a little gossiping chat with his fellow-clerk, Mr. Tompkins. The nobler game of chess was generally too fatiguing for his acquaintances, often for himself. Cricket would be a great resource in summer time, but that was a long way off.

He tried once or twice to sing, both alone and in company, but said nothing would come but a dog's howl. The little local evening parties, and especially the young gentlemen and ladies, in his fastidious state of mind, at first were insupportable. Under these circumstances it is not surprising if he gradually declined from that tone of mind in which he had lived for a brief time after the interview in Bushney Park, or that he should have been able to recur to it less and less frequently. He made great efforts to do so—frequent efforts—but they *were* efforts, and they became increasingly difficult and even wearisome. Just as it was on former occasions, so more than ever now—if he could have given himself up entirely to the study of history, philosophy, and poetry—working to accumulate rich stores of noble and beautiful thoughts, and then to pour them into the minds of listening and appreciative audiences, he could probably have lived a certain kind of peaceful and spiritual life, apart from her whom he would still have loved with all the chivalrous fervour and devotion of his nature, and have gone to his grave a lonely but not unhappy man, rejoicing in his usefulness to society—while, as far as Leila was concerned, content with the consciousness of having her perfect trust and love on earth, and looking forward to an unspeakably happy and eternal union with her in heaven. He was strong enough, perhaps, certainly pure and noble enough, for this—but at the best, it would have been “living without God in the world.” And the Father had some better thing in store for him. Unbroken tranquillity, unimpaired health, joyous

outward activity and success, congenial social intercourse, freedom from every sort of trial—would have been necessary for Gerald Arlington to have lived such a life as that.

These delightful conditions are rarely granted, however, to any one for long, happily for the growth of our highest faculties, our *spiritual* nature. In the present case, had he been a prosperous and joyous *littérateur*, Gerald's intellectual life only would have been cultivated, and this would have shot up into disproportionate and overshadowing luxuriance. That which has too often had to be said of far greater and more richly endowed natures by their rejected Ruler and Friend was happily not said of Gerald Arlington, "He is joined to idols—let him alone." But it was said of him instead, that the Lord would "perfect that which concerned Him," though at considerable cost. Could he but have remembered and acted on one of Leila's words at their last interview about "waiting for the Lord"—could he have believed with his whole heart that promise she had quoted, "the Lord will be good unto them that wait for Him"—he could and would have been spared some trials. But he was not likely to believe, for he had never even seen those promises, nor had much chance of doing so. True, there was a handsome Bible in his trunk—it was his mother's gift when he was fifteen, and he would on no account have left it behind him—but he had scrupulously abstained from using it, for the most part because of its handsome binding, and was content with having it safe in its hiding place.

Well, the troubles and temptations that were destined to search him happened to come in the following way, just about the time when Harry Fortescue was harnessing in for the winter with his old energy and enthusiasm, though in rather a gloomy way, to the courses of clinical medicine and surgery for which he had entered at the best medical school in Vienna.

The immediate demand for Gerald's services as a traveller had partially ceased, or his rounds were near home. He had a good many lonely evenings at his lodgings, for, as we have seen, he often shirked such visiting as he might have had among the townspeople after a little acquaintance therewith. The neighbouring gentry, whose circles would have afforded him some of the culture and refinement he had been used to, and to whom he would have been a considerable acquisition, of course knew and cared nothing about an obscure clerk in a coal and timber wharf, though but a single introduction from an old London friend or two would have given him a very pleasant *entrée* among them. But here his *alias* was in his way, and he shrank from making himself known as

the son of the once eminent and now fallen house of Arlington and Co. Moreover, he seldom went to church after one or two trials. It was all so very slow—the Dissenting chapels offended his taste and his theology. Thus he had no “church fellowship.”

So, as his fellow clerks observed, “he kept himself to himself,” sometimes rising into very beautiful and noble realms of thought and feeling, dwelling with deepest tenderness and purity on the memory of the charms of the beloved one far away over sea and mountain, sometimes craving with passionate desire for a nearer, more real, more—(must he confess the thought? He did at last confess it)—more womanly tenderness and affection than that which was associated in his mind, not merely with his last parting from Leila Featherstone, but with unmistakable features in her general character. She seemed to him often so “star-like apart” that he thought of her not only in her lofty, spiritual loveliness, but in her distant coldness, her sarcastic humours, and, perchance, pride. With all his romantic energy he had a wonderful deal of womanly softness in his own nature, and that made him yearn for it in the woman whom he loved. But when he had wanted it, and missed it in poor Leila, and thought there was too much of the opposite qualities, the dreaming poet forgot the singular relations in which they had hitherto been placed to each other, and how much there had been in his own manner at various times to constrain her to a proud and frigid reticence. But he felt the mischief of his blindness all the same.

Now, also, he began in his solitary musings to realize how great had been the help he derived in his struggles against his lower nature in former days from the employment of his lively imagination in composition or in dreams of conjugal felicity, if not with Leila, with one like her, were it possible to find such; but now there seemed a cold and cruel extinguisher put upon all those hopes and dreams, for he could look forward to marrying neither her nor anyone else. He could not bear the dreary vacuum, but went staggering about in his loneliness with his aching heart longing for something to love, longing for love in return, clutching now at one support, then at another—occasionally looking in at some evening party, “with a little music,” and giving himself for the moment to the fascinations of young ladies with long ringlets and charming voices, who, however, soon pronounced him “very clever, no doubt,” but too much “stuck up” to suit their fancy. Secretly they allowed he was good-looking, and sang “divinely,” but were quite sure he was absurdly conceited. The young men took the depreciatory view of the *ci-devant* poet, but considerably intensified;

and Gerald, with mingled amusement and pain, perceived it. Then for weeks he avoided all society, and nourished himself on Carlyle's French Revolution, and memories of Bushney Park. After awhile, perhaps, he would be in a state of vehement indignation and disgust because he had been persuaded for once and away to stay for an evening revel with some of his companions, or employers' customers, in rather humbler life, but where he had met highly cultivated farmers' daughters, and found that he had considerably enjoyed a waltz, or even "Sir Roger de Coverley," and a romp! Alternately giving himself up to the exuberant, hearty, rather sensuous existence of these rural fascinations, then once and away trying to enjoy the more refined and sentimental but rather uncultured charms of the town circle; then for long intervals secluding himself from all society, and leaving pretty faces, suspicious and disdainful belles, tender, palpitating hearts, hopeful mammas, all in the bleak shade of his neglect. And so, because he felt himself raised far above all the degrading temptations of his business life by the elevation of tone and feeling to which he had been restored through the influences of an hour never to be forgotten, poor Gerald, in his seasons of depression and loneliness, fancied himself also lifted above all danger to his higher life and his nobler love from any other quarter.

It was after a longer period than usual of the ascetic self-denial and solitude system that Arlington had been obliged to go to a respectable farmer's house, about three miles from Longbeach, where he had more than once been warmly welcomed, and where he was sometimes tenderly looked for. He had been obliged to yield to a pressing request from his employers not to take any Christmas holiday, but keep it till summer-time; and he had found some slight alleviation of his grief at not joining the far-off, happy party at Neville Court, in the hearty hospitality of this house on the recent Christmas day. On the day in question, he had walked out thither, in the short January afternoon, in a very gloomy frame of mind, just transacted his business with the old man, then sadly, with a weary and sorrowful heart, turned away from the shy and flattering invitations of the blooming young daughter to "stay and have a cup of tea." He did so long for a home, and a wife to bless it, he cared not how humble it might be; and the sight of the pretty, cosy parlour, beaming in the darkening winter twilight with the bright, ruddy firelight, where the tea with all its hospitable accompaniments and the muslin-apparelled young tea-maker were awaiting him, sent him away dejected—and it is, doubtless, to be feared—impatient, rebellious.

The latter part of his walk lay across some fields which had been banked out from the river. As he turned down to enter them it was getting so dark that he doubted whether he would not take the much longer round of the road, but he was getting fagged, and pushed on across the meadows where the fog was gathering. Heavy rains had fallen all the previous night and part of that day, as well as for some weeks previously. As he climbed a stile something reminded him of a sorrowful sight he had seen two hours before on entering the same meadows from the town side. It was a poor girl, very neatly dressed, sitting in a most forlorn and dejected attitude near the last stile, before gaining the bridge. He remembered she had just raised her head as he passed, and she struck him as being what novelists would call a "very interesting young person;" but just at that moment one of his employers' wharfingers had come over the stile, touching his hat and saying, "Good-night, sir." He remembered now, too, that he had called after him—"I shall be back in an hour or two, John, if that barge comes up to-night;" and that the man had said, "No fear of that, to-night, sir. There's a freshet in the river, and it's as much as a boat could do to hold her moorings, let alone coming up again' it, to-night." All this came back to his recollection, just as a man's figure emerged from the gloom, coming in the opposite direction to that in which he himself was going.

"You'd best make haste, sir, if you want to get to town to-night," cried the figure, "or I don't know but what you'd best turn back. They say the upper sluice has burst. There's a power of water coming down, and I doubt but the old wooden bridge in the meadow won't stand it long. You'd better come back, sir. I'm after our cows."

"Thank you," was Gerald's reply—"Gammon!" his thought. But he walked on more quickly, yet wearily. He felt very indifferent to what might happen. Another field was passed. He could hear in the distance a sound he had never heard there before. It was the hoarse roar of the rushing waters. Another figure now dimly appeared, hesitatingly approaching him. It was a young girl—the same he had seen as he passed the spot before. Claspings her hands together she exclaimed, in a soft, agitated voice,

"Ah, Mr. George! Mr. Arkwright! I am so glad you've come at last! I was getting so frightened, and I couldn't bear going into the town alone, and I've waited a long, long time to see you . . ." she stopped abruptly, with eyes cast down, and trembling with excitement.

"What, Jessy! Is it you?" answered Gerald, in amazement.

"How on earth came you here, my poor girl, and at this time of night? Have you left Deansford?"

"Oh, yes, sir," the girl began, and then her voice trembled, and she continued in broken sentences, half sobbing, "I was obliged to come away, sir. My aunt and I fell out, and I heard you were living here, sir, and you—you were always kind to me, sir, and I hadn't a friend I could go to." Here the poor girl gave way and sobbed outright.

"Don't cry, my child," said Gerald, soothingly. "Come on to the town and we'll get some one to take care of you. You are tired, I daresay. Don't cry, that's a good girl."

Gerald felt paternal and protector-like. The kind voice and words checked the friendless young creature's tears, and she followed meekly by his side.

"But you said you had been waiting for me. How did you know I was coming?"

"I sat just here, sir, as you went by an hour or two ago, and I knew you in an instant, and I heard you say to some one you should soon be back, so I waited."

"Poor Jessy! That was a cold, damp watch, though. And have you no friends in Longbeach, then?"

"No, sir. I've none nowhere now" (inclination to sob), "except father, and I durstn't go home to him."

"Why, you've not been doing anything wrong, I hope?"

He faced full round upon her, and even by that dim light could see her sweet little face covered with blushes, as she sagely and coquettishly answered—

"Oh, no—no indeed, sir! but—that young man, sir, I told you of at Deansford—a long time ago, you know, sir. Him as I was brought up with, you know, down at the Holmwood. He came to Deansford and wanted me to marry him, and father said I must, and aunt said I must, and I said I wouldn't, and they both turned again' me because I wouldn't, and father said I should go home with him, and Aunt said I shouldn't stay no longer with her, and they said it was all nonsense, and the young man had been very kind to father, and they said it would be the worse for me if I didn't——." (Pause.)

"Well, and why wouldn't you have him, Jessy?"

"Oh, indeed—indeed I couldn't, sir. He's not at all a nice young man. He used always to drink so, and both he and father used to smell so of beer and spirits when they came; but I am ashamed to be telling you all this, and yet I must, for indeed it was not wrong of me, sir, and I've no friends but you, sir. I couldn't

go to dear Miss Fortescue, you see, sir, because *he* lived close by. And I'm afraid, from somethin' Aunt said, father had been getting into trouble at home—poaching or somethin', and the young man had stood by him; but why Aunt should have——. Lord save us, sir, we can't get by there!" she cried, pointing to the line of swift running water which was now visibly pouring across the path they were pursuing. The noise had been increasing for some time, but Gerald thought it was only the angry stream chafing within its banks.

"I don't know, Jessy. It would be a long way round. You won't mind a little wetting; we have only to gain that bridge you see there."

"No, sir; but indeed we can't pass!" cried the terrified girl, as the waters came sweeping down with increasing force.

"By Jupiter!" cried Gerald, "we are in for it," as he took a few rapid strides back again along the path just traversed. "The flood is coming down worse there behind us than even here. We were only just in time. 'Pon my word, Jessy, we're in a bit of a mess. Never mind; we'll be all right soon. You won't mind me carrying you across this water, will you?"

"Oh, no, sir; thank you, if I'm not too heavy." And the blushing maid let Gerald take her up in his strong arms, as he prepared to wade through the dark, swirling flood.

It was an exciting and dangerous situation—physically, if not morally. Gerald had some difficulty in keeping his footing as the cold waters pressed against his limbs. A loud crashing, and then a heavy splash just in front of them.

"There goes the old foot bridge, Jessy! Lucky we had'n't reached it."

"Oh dear, oh dear, what will become of us! But I'm too heavy, sir. Put me down, *please* put me down, sir!" she exclaimed, piteously, as Gerald staggered beneath his burden and the force of the stream.

"Not yet, my lass; wait an instant. This is better than the bridge," gasped Gerald, as he struggled up to the remains of an old roofless stable that stood in the corner of the field close by the foot of the vanished bridge. Two walls were standing presenting a corner to the flood, and by gaining that comparative protection Gerald was enabled to lift Jessy, without further mishap, on to some cross beams which still formed a kind of ledge backed by a lingering bit of the roof. Then he climbed up after her, and shouted loudly for assistance, thinking there might be some of his employers' boatmen astir at such a time to render help, especially as

one of them knew where he was gone. They listened anxiously for a reply. No answering voice. Indeed it was difficult to see how any boat could get near them in such a headlong stream as now came pouring past. They were safe enough, apparently, where they were for a few hours; but Gerald's clothes were soaked, and when the glow of his exertions were passed he began to feel cool enough. But poor little Jessy's teeth were chattering alike from cold and fear and compassion for her protector. She wanted to take off her merino cloak and wrap it round him, instead of which he insisted upon throwing half his own pea-jacket over her. So there they sat, side by side, and waited the result of Gerald's hullabaloo. A curious mixture of moisture and romance, of danger, discomfort, dampness, and delight in the whole affair. Gerald couldn't help rather liking it in spite of his chilliness, but felt it couldn't, must not, last, and shouted away lustily at intervals. Still no answer. The old walls began to tremble a little under the repeated assaults of the still increasing flood. Gerald had been watching a part of the wall where he could just see the line of the stream as it eddied past, and at length he was convinced the water was rising. Were he and his poor little trembling companion to be swept together out of existence that dark, foggy night, clasped in each other's arms? What a strange, fantastic fate was presenting itself.

"Are you cold, Jessy? Don't be afraid, my child. There will certainly be boats coming for us. As I told you, they know I'm out."

"But perhaps they'll think you never would try to come back on such a night, sir." Just then three or four of the furthest stones of one of the walls fell with a loud crash into the flood. Half-a-dozen more quickly followed. The water was now very evidently rising. Once more Gerald lifted up his voice through the darkness, clear and strong, with an energy given him more by compassion for the girl who looked up at him with such imploring and yet trustful eyes, than for himself. He felt rather a gloomy and desperate satisfaction at the thought of getting an end put to all his troubles, and passing away from a world that had treated him of late with very scant courtesy—might he not say with grim cruelty. Yet there was a creeping of the flesh, a dreary shrinking and shuddering of the spirit at the thought of choking down there like blind puppies amid the dark waters. He did not feel altogether ready to front death. He could have swum a good while to save himself, but he knew he should not desert the girl and she would soon drown him. An indescribably tender, human sympathy seemed drawing him

to the maiden whom he circled with his big pea-jacket and one arm. She seemed to come between him and the fierce, horrid impulse to fling himself into the swollen, gurgling waters—to be keeping him within, even if only just within, the circle of loving life and human affections, bidding him to live in hope and love. And it was the very girl in whom he had once begun to feel so much interest that he had fled from the house, and even the town in which she lived. But that was before he knew that Leila Featherstone cared for him, or that he might love her without wronging his friend. Of course Jessie was and could be nothing to him now. Yet—well—Once again he raised a tremendous shout as another piece of the wall fell with a crash, and this time he *was* answered. Faintly above the roar of waters came a hoarse shout: “Hillo, ho, ho, boy! Ho!” Then Gerald sent back another cry, and presently the voice came nearer. “Hold on! Where away? What, be that you, Master George?” was the friendly and welcome greeting that now came through the darkness. “I thought you never would have been so venturesome, or I’d been after you afore now. But, bless my stars, how for sure am I to get at you. Bill Hawkins was coming down with me, for he said you might be out, and he was sure he heard summun a-yelling; but he had to pick up a whole lot up stream there—father, mother, children, and pigs—who’d been drownded out and were screeching like mad, which maybe kept us from hearin’ o’ you.”

Meantime the old boatman was warily swinging his boat from tree to tree, for oars were useless there until he had got within a boat’s length of the wall.

“Eh! what, be there two of you, Master George? Well, well, I never!” and the old chap squinted up at the young couple and uttered his last sentiment in so comical a manner that Gerald couldn’t help laughing, and poor Jessie almost longed to drop into the water to hide her mortification.

As Gerald lowered her into the boat, it tugged frantically at its moorings, but the rope held out bravely, and in two or three minutes Jessie (covered up in the pea-jacket) sat cowering in the stern, while Gerald and the boatman were pulling with all their might against the rushing stream, into which they shot the moment they swung clear of the trees. But they were not out of danger yet.

It was the hardest bit of rowing Gerry had ever had in his life; and as the boatman looked at him once or twice admiringly, he observed, with a gasp, “It’s pulling for life; and it’s lucky as you know’s how to pull, sir: and pull you can!” To be swept out into

the main stream and be carried down among the tumbling trees and fragmentary houses, or escaping destruction there, to be hurried out to sea about sun-rise and meet the breakers in their little river-boat—to say nothing of Gerald's wet clothes—would most likely have been an unmistakable termination to the career of all three. So they rowed till the perspiration streamed from their brows, and every muscle seemed strained to cracking—rowed stoutly through the darkness and roaring waters; and at length reached the town, doubtless with thankfulness—certainly with aching bones.

But what was to become of Jessy? Gerald briefly told the boatman how he had met her in the meadow, saying nothing, of course, about their former acquaintance, and asked if his wife could manage to dry and house her for the night. The old lady, on being applied to, gruffly consented, and Gerald dragged himself home to his lonely lair, wondering at the strange relations into which he was being brought with the motherless girl, who had fled to him for refuge. He soon fell asleep, and had wonderful dreams, in which Leila and Jessy, boatmen, drowning, and farmers' pretty daughters were all mingled in curious and hopeless confusion.

CHAPTER IX.

Now it had so happened that Gerald's fellow-clerk, in writing to old acquaintances at Deansford, had boasted of having got Mr. Arkwright a situation in their "house." Jessy's aunt had heard the letter when out at a snug little tea-drinking, and had naturally communicated the interesting intelligence to her niece. Jessy brooded over the exciting news with tender secrecy. Many a time her thoughts flew over to the great warehouse and wharf, where she imagined the kind and handsome young gentleman to be sitting in the counting-house, making heaps of money. Many a time she caught herself thinking whether anything was ever likely to take her to Longbeach, and whether Mr. George would haply remember her if she met him in the street and dropped him a curtsy. Then she chided herself roundly for such nonsense, and thought of him no more—till the next time—which was probably when taking up the

tea to the young man who now occupied the first floor, and who was rather sharp and peremptory, particularly if his boots were not ready when he wanted them. Then there was that dear little ribbon, much too precious to be worn, though it certainly was a thousand pities it should be kept in a box, for having tried it in her glossy brown hair and against her blooming cheek, she decided that it was very becoming. So she bought a bit just like it, and wore that on Sundays and holidays, with a pretty, jaunty vanity, and a consciousness of the original having been given by that very nice gentleman of whom everybody spoke so well. Then, when the sad visit of her father and young Reedham took place, and stern requirement was made of her to let herself be given in marriage to the latter, she felt her former dislike to him grown into an invincible repugnance; and when things came to extremities, and she felt herself too weak to resist by fair means, she hatched a little plot, fell sick for the nonce, persuaded her father to depart with Reedham—aunt promising to send her off to Dorking in a day or two. When despatched accordingly by the slow day coach to London, she hoaxed the coachman with a craft and mendacity that astonished herself, got him to deposit her and her box at a small inn in a certain great town through which they passed, and walked off to Longbeach next day, sending on her box by a waggon to the “Pig and Whistle,” in the desired haven, where the waggon slumbered till it’s diurnal period of return. Thus cleverly—yet not quite innocently in one sense, though in perfect ignorant innocence in another—she went on that path that led to her final destiny. Poor little wilful, sentimental Jessy!

When Gerald walked down to the boatman’s cottage the next day it was without any definite idea as to what he ought to do. He found Jessy was just as devoid of plan or purpose as her worst enemy could have wished. So he came away, revolving visions and schemes, making uneasy moral reflections. His attention was distracted by the signs of the devastation wrought by yesterday’s flood on every side. The waters had subsided; but the stream was still foaming along with irresistible force. His employer’s wharf had suffered severely, and many barges had been driven on the banks or out to sea. It was abundantly evident that Jessy and he had had a narrow escape. The consciousness of the common danger they had together incurred—of the deliverance he had effected for her with the old boatman’s assistance—the touching, loving trustfulness with which she had fled to him for protection from a persecuting and distasteful lover—the shy, innocent gratitude and gladness with which she met him again—all naturally excited a warm interest in

him for the poor homeless girl, and made him at length resolve to do what he could to shelter and support her for awhile, till "something should turn up." So having told his landlady rather more than he had confided to the boatman, and in an off-hand, indifferent way, which almost imposed on himself, added a sketch of his first acquaintance with her, and of the lover's offensive addresses, he secured the good old woman's sympathy for the friendless lass, and provided temporary employment for her at a dressmaker's. But then he was rather startled by finding his landlady proposing to let the young woman lodge at her house—"For don't you see, sir, I'm a-getting in years, and want a little help and company like, and this young lass will just fit, and there's the empty room for her, sir, for I've never been able to let it since my boy left for 'Merriker.'" Gerald's common-sense and regard for appearances, if not for the girl herself—to say nothing of other considerations—might have told him he should on no account, of course, have agreed to this plan. But he was taken by surprise; didn't like to admit, even for an instant, that there could be the slightest reason against it. So the very man who had formerly left both a house and even a town because a maid-of-all-work was living there, lest he should think too much about her, or make her care too much for him, actually consented to old Mrs. Pawsey's motherly and very natural proposition, because he knew in what a very different position he himself now stood with regard to Leila Featherstone. Besides, as he said to himself, "the child would be much safer from harm and getting into bad company if she were under his own eye, and under the surveillance of such a respectable old lady as good Mrs. Pawsey." Gerald, in fact, felt a fatherly interest in the homeless wanderer. He was too modest to think much of any risk of interesting her—thought his former scruple on that head rather nonsensical—and so the arrangement altogether seemed simple and natural enough. But when Gerald communicated the plan to Jessy, in the course of the day, he might have been warned by seeing her mingled bashful and coquettish thankfulness and delight. However, he felt so "strong in honesty," that he let the warning pass "as idle wind." Nevertheless, when he came home to tea that evening, and saw her sweet little face coming in at the door of his room with the tea things, which she said she had got leave to bring up, and, as he marked again all her dainty little ways and winning deferential courtesies, he found himself heaving a deep sigh, and saying to himself when she had left the room, "Well, I don't wonder I liked that girl so much (though I'm afraid she's rather vain. Poor little thing!) when I lived at

Deansford, and left in a hurry. But now——" (a long pause—feet on fender)—"Now, Gerald Arlington" (addressing himself as he walked wearily about the room), "are you not a fool to have her lodging here—a regular fool, or knave? . . . Pooh, pooh, the folly is not where I was finding it! But in fancying that now, *now*, now that I know *who* loves me, whose angel lips I have dared to touch—that now I can be in danger—in the remotest danger of any meaner passion! No, no. I am bound to do what I can to help this poor child, and I will watch over her till she is quite safely provided for; but nothing more."

Had Gerry the remotest idea of rivalry in his affections—of Jessy being anything more to him than a poor little ward or sister, say, rather, waif and stray? Not the faintest shadow of such a notion, of course.

The fact of her humble parentage, and the menial position, as he regarded it, of domestic service in which he had first known her, would of itself have been sufficient to prevent his looking at her as a companion for life, and, we need not say, he was unquestionably farther, if possible, than ever in his existence before from cherishing any base design. Yet he could not be altogether blind to the danger arising from the strange and sorrowful relation in which he stood to Leila Featherstone. That relation, so fascinating, so hopeless, preyed upon him, as we have seen, with consuming force. The very distance between Leila and Jessy, socially and intellectually—the infinite superiority of the peerless lady increased the danger of his caring for the humbler lass with rather warmer feelings than those which he supposed at first it was possible he should ever entertain towards her. He thought he might innocently, nay, most benevolently and usefully, allow himself to be comforted and amused in his sorrowful loneliness by this gentle, simple-hearted, loving child, as he persisted in regarding her. For it *was* an infinite comfort day after day to his weary soul to see some one with feminine grace and innocence caring for him so lovingly, watching for his smile of thanks so gratefully—giving him that humble sympathy for which, in one form or other, it was at once his weakness and strength always to crave.

As for poor Jessy, it was just like heaven for a time to her. With all that native refinement and delicacy of feeling so often found in girls of the humblest rank, and with those warm, clinging affections rarely absent from girls of any rank, she was exceedingly vain and a thorough coquette. Hence she was always craving for admiration, or, at least, attention and sympathy, but shrank from it unless combined with the courtesy and freedom from coarseness

which she seldom found in her own class. From the first evening that Mr. Arkwright had come to the house at Deansford, and had spoken to her in his musical voice so kindly, and yet "so like a gentleman," she had looked up to him with a reverential interest which gradually led to deeper feelings.

The very purity both of her and his own mind made their present relations to one another, in some respects, the more dangerous. It is worth thinking of, my excellent friend, that your very excellencies may sometimes be the source of your greatest danger!

"How is it they let you off so early, Jessy," quoth Gerald, one evening, as the young dressmaker came gliding in with the tea-tray.

"Oh, they let me bring home my work, sir, sometimes, to keep old Mrs. Pawsey company. She's so lonely, you see, since her son and his wife went away to America."

"Well, that is very accommodating of them. And what work do you have to do?" A foolish question which he had no business to ask. The girl, of course, was delighted, and blushing replied:—

"Oh, I'm making something so beautiful now, sir; a sort of collar and cape for a lady that's to be a bride and going to Canada. May I bring it up and shew it you, sir," she added, after a moment's hesitation, "when I take away the tea-things?"

"You may, Jessy—by all means." The poor gentleman wants something to amuse him, was the reflection of the old woman and the young one.

So the elegant apparel was brought up and led the way to more general conversation, and Jessy showed a commendable sense of her own ignorance on points of geography, primarily in relation to America, as well as on various other matters of polite education; so that Gerald was moved by compassion to get a small atlas from his trunk and enlighten her mind, and then let her take the map down to Mrs. Pawsey for the edification of that good lady, by tracing the route and present "*locus in quo*" of "dear John" and his accompaniments. Then, on another evening, a volume of Byron's poetry lay on the table, and somehow the little flirt couldn't help whispering, half to herself, "There are some beautiful words in there, I know," and somehow Gerald couldn't help hearing her say it, and asking if she was fond of poetry; and when she replied with more outspoken vehemence than he had ever witnessed in her before, how could he resist reading a few lines aloud, while she stood tranced in silent admiration and bliss? Well, it was very pleasant to poor, thoughtless Gerald to have this young, fresh, unworn heart opening itself to all the beautiful influences which he

could pour into it so lavishly—very pleasant, too, to be able to make one being so happy. Would it have been equally pleasant had she been deformed or sickly, pining in prison and, therefore, far more in need of his kind attentions? “Aye, but natur’ is natur’,” observes our old lady downstairs. Then he found out one evening that she could sing very nicely, though without having much voice. And she was scarcely happier than he was, sometimes, when he was listening to one of her simple melodies or Methodist hymns, for it brought to him dreams of heavenly rest and peace—the more exquisitely sweet from the contrast to his ordinary state of mind. It was the discovery of this last gift which broke down the great safeguard against too much intimacy, hitherto existing between them, viz., her habit of standing when she came into his room. He could not keep her in that attitude while she sang to him. She could not, of course, resist the request she had long been secretly hoping he would make, that she would just take a seat a minute. Old Mrs. Pawsey did not get quite so much of Jessy’s company after that, but she was very unselfish and unsuspicious, and dozed a good deal. Once Gerald sang himself, and the girl almost cried for joy. After which he taught her some duets.

It was not very surprising that Jessy’s whole nature and faculties seemed expanding gracefully in the rich sunlight of Gerald’s kindness, with his instructions in literature, grammar, and geography, &c. There was a playfulness and innocent gaiety in the girl, which now came occasionally and timidly peeping forth “like violets,” said our poet to himself, “stirred beneath their leaves by the breath of early spring. What a pity she’s not quite up in her grammar, or in her aspirates either!” (But what is the use of recording such deficiencies?) In spite of defective aspirates and grammar, however, life was certainly brighter to poor Gerry for this little bit of sunshine, or rather moonshine (which it was in more senses than one), that came glancing so charmingly into his lonely life. He couldn’t resist, at last, telling her so one evening—common gratitude required him to do it—after the lesson in poetry was over. He took a pen and wrote her name in the little volume from which he had been reading, adding, “from George Arkwright, with his affectionate regards.”

“There, Jessy, you must keep that for my sake, because you have cheered me up a bit, many a time, when I’ve been in the doldrums.”

It was under strange circumstances when he next saw that book, and his own handwriting in it. Jessy, taking it with well-concealed but secret passionate gladness, thanked him gently.

"But I don't think you can care about me, sir," she continued, softly, bashfully, and coquettishly, while glancing up at him gratefully, "because I'm so foolish and ignorant."

Now it was quite true that Gerald, having great intellectual powers of a special sort himself, had always, in former days, craved for those intellectual abilities and attainments in the woman he loved which are needful for true sympathy and perfect love when the man has himself considerable intellectual gifts, but which, practically, are too often only found in woman dissevered from that feminine softness, pliability, and humility which constitute some of the greatest charms and most attractive graces of the female character. The desire for these qualities and indifference to intellectual gifts was increased in Gerald's mind, as he sank into the lower scale of spiritual and intellectual being, by his present occupations and melancholy way of life. Hence he replied to Jessy's last remark with some energy.

"Ah, my child, that is just one reason why I do care for you. I know that *you* won't"—despise me, he added to himself. Then continued aloud, rather sadly, as he put his foot on the fender and gazed into the fire, "My good little Jessy, you must know that the only women I have ever yet cared about have either been wiser or nobler than myself. It is very pleasant to me to have you here to be kind to, as you say I am, and to teach"—and to be fond of, he was going to add, but did not. Then he saw the pretty little foolish face turned up to him, and the blue eyes beaming with such an indescribable expression that he was fairly swept away, and taking one of her little hands as he rose from his seat he bent down, and pressed one kiss, just one, on her fair, smooth forehead and said—

"Be my little sister, Jessy—I never had a younger sister—I do care about you, and I shall be very glad to be of all the use I can to you. You are a good girl, my poor little Jessy, and want to be a good woman—don't you?—and I'll help you all I can, in any way that's possible. Shall I be your elder brother, Jessy, and will you love me as your brother, and let me be of use to you, my child?"

The words were very fair and very innocent—so were the speaker's and the listener's hearts—and yet, with her hand (though but for a moment) pressed in his—her forehead (though but for an instant) touched by his lips—they were walking along that path which has led, in a million cases, two pure and loving hearts down to sin and shame. Yet all the fault has not been always, and entirely, on the part of the man.

How did all this affect Leila Featherstone's destiny? As we have seen, she was both willing and resolved to live and die

unmarried rather than destroy the last chance, faint though it might be, of one day becoming Gerald Arlington's wife. And he—was throwing that chance irrevocably away.

In spite of all the brave, unselfish things which Leila had said to her lover about her desire that he should be free as air, nay, should *seek* in marriage with some one else the home and the happiness she never expected to share with him, what would her life be worth when the tidings reached her that he had taken her at her word and married somebody else—a vain flighty child, without education or strength of character of any kind—perhaps even betrayed the girl? Had she then garnered all her deepest affections in the frail vessel of such love, in such a heart as this of Gerald Arlington's? Oh! these poetic, fascinating, loving geniuses! What a world of trouble in all ages they have caused the women who love them! For women do love them—more, perhaps, than any others of the masculine sex—that is poetic, unselfish women. And most women are the first—many the second (or both)—by nature.

Of course there began to be a little gossip in Longbeach respecting Mr. Arkwright and the pretty dressmaker, who was observed to be lodging at the same house.

“That's a charming little lass, now, I must say, Mr. Arkwright; a man might be very comfortable with a companion of that cut, decidedly,” observed Mr. Tomkins, one evening when he had just “dropped in to tea” in his old familiar style. Of late, however, he had not deemed himself sufficiently valued or even particularly welcome; and finding it rather slow when he did come, he had not favoured his brother scribe with much of his company. “Yes, you're a man of taste.” Remarks like these occasionally reaching Gerald, but still more Jessy's ill-concealed happiness and seemingly artless pride, made Gerald begin to reflect seriously once or twice whether he was dealing fairly by the poor girl. But Mr. Tomkins' admiration of her, especially his closing remark, after watching her every movement till she left the room, viz., “Well,” (with a deep sigh) “a man might do worse,” while Gerald secretly resented his impertinence, made him aware that his feelings were fast becoming different from what he had fancied—becoming what he had thought was utterly impossible. They were very different certainly, from what he had ever felt for Miss Featherstone. How, then, if this was, after all, the real love which actual man ought to feel for actual woman? He was not an angel. She whom he had so worshipped *was*—all except her pride and a just perceptible inequality of temper. And their love for each other was something

far above and beyond this earth. Leila herself had besought him so to regard it and to mate himself elsewhere, if he found life too lonely without an earthly bride. And life, he thought, was fast becoming unbearable—and he argued it was far better to link himself with a simple, pure and uncultured girl like Jessy, than with one nearer to Leila's level—who might ultimately drive out from his heart's throne that peerless and beloved image. After yielding himself so far as he had already done to Jessy's bewitching softness and sweetness he seemed to have somehow lost that power of rising up to his old tone of thought and feeling. He knew it was on a lower level that he was now living and proposing to live—more ignoble. He knew and confessed to himself that he sometimes thought this poor girl rather coquettish and silly, and very vain. But why should he any longer *aspire*, in any way, or to anything? He had ignominiously failed in all his aspirations—had been cast out, crushed; why should he not marry Jessie, and settle down comfortably on his £200 per annum? This could not be called false to his nobler love, to that pure and lofty being whom he had once loved so passionately—who had once loved him. Or if it could—what then? he was weary, even unto death, of lofty idealism and far-off perfection. These thoughts at first were fiercely repulsed—but they would come again and again. And whenever the bare possibility of his one day making Jessie his wife came across him, his manner to her, of course, became involuntarily tenderer—he was less afraid of that intimacy which was so very sweet to her, and so decidedly pleasant to him—the lessons in geography, reading, writing, and poetry became more and more dangerous. One night, in particular, after a day in which Gerald had been more than ordinarily depressed, the poor fellow had surrendered himself unreservedly to the happiness which Jessy's singing and prattle gave him. The relief from his previous desolate dreariness was indescribable. He had been pretending to scold her for some carelessness in her writing, and she looked up in his face with such a mixture of arch fun and loving playfulness, that he was on the point of taking her in his arms and whispering, “Be my little wife, Jessy.” And if he had done so! Well, well, we all know what has happened in thousands of cases when marriage is promised and fully intended; and we know, too, how infallibly—if he had played the villain, if he had betrayed instead of marrying her—he would have lost his love, as well as his respect, for one who had failed to guard her own honour. “Be my little wife?” Eh!—was it so? Something in the last word struck an alarm-bell in his conscience. A secret

half-consciousness rose up within him that he was playing a false game—that that sacred word meant more than he was really prepared for—that he was not thinking of her as a companion, but as a toy—that at the best there would be no such love between them as he had long profoundly felt there ought to be between two souls made in God's image. "Be not unequally yoked together," had some meaning for him. He had seen there was no real strength of high principle any more than of mental power in the girl's character. It was mere sweetness and softness, and very warm affections. She only cared for history, &c., as he saw plainly enough, because such things interested him. Of all she learnt, it was only the sentimental poetry she valued for its own sake. He well knew, for he had witnessed in other cases, how such a nature, under all the cares of a household, of maternity, and straitened means, generally sinks down into a flat, common-place, rather vulgar character when mated with a man who is constantly either wanting her sympathy in his higher life, or contemptuously neglecting, perhaps impatiently snubbing her because she is continually disappointing him, and is so far his inferior. The sweetest of tempers, also, will break down under continual disappointment and irritation. In short, Gerald Arlington knew in his inmost heart, when he once dared to look there, that there was a great gulf between him and the pretty dress-making coquette which could never be bridged over in this world. They might both throw themselves into that gulf and meet at the bottom, but * * * *

[Perhaps that excellent Miss Fortescue had better not have interfered, says some sage observer—better not, on the whole, have sent Jessy Shalford away from Dorking.]

So with a mighty effort the man, that evening, conquered and finished the writing lesson with scarcely another word. They parted as usual.

For the next twenty-four hours Arlington was battling with the dread temptation. The poor girl's plaintive, loving expression, as she bade him good night, haunted him like a spell. Twenty times the next day he found his imagination and his passion hounding him on to fling his scruples to the winds, and take the happiness that seemed offered to him, and give the happiness that was craved from him, and leave the consequences to take care of themselves.

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